THE SOCIAL TEACHINGS OF THE JEWISH PROPHETS

WILLIAM BENNETT BIZZELL

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A Study in Biblical Sociology

BY

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BOSTON
SHERMAN, FRENCH & COMPANY
1916

TO

MY MOTHER

PREFACE

We are in the midst of a *renaissance* in the study of the Old Testament scriptures. The evidence of this fact is to be found in the large number of volumes that are now appearing from the press, dealing with many phases of Jewish literature. This awakening is largely the result of recent efforts to relate the ethical, legislative and social teachings of Israel to the problems and conditions of the present day. The content of the prophetic literature is rich in suggestiveness and social teaching for an age like our own. The realization of this fact makes it desirable to search out and evaluate this social content. This point of view has given a new significance to the work of the Jewish prophet, and stimulated a new interest in his message to the world.

This volume is the outgrowth of studies begun in the University of Chicago several years ago, and since made use of in a series of lectures delivered to college students and instructors. The approach to the study of prophetic literature from the social point of view has aroused a genuine interest, but the fact that I could find no book that exactly met the requirements made the instruction somewhat difficult. It happens that a volume or two has recently appeared which partially supplies this need.

It will be obvious to the Bible student that the study has its limitations. No attempt has been

made to present a comprehensive analysis of the prophetic books. There are many familiar passages and many important religious views that lie outside the province of this study. The Messianic and religious elements have either been kept in the background or ignored all together. Not that the author thinks these unimportant, or less important, but because they have repeatedly been the subject of discussion by Bible scholars, and at the present time there are many volumes in English that treat them scholarly and adequately.

The plan of study assumes the necessity of an understanding of the political and social situation as a basis for an adequate appreciation of the social teachings of the prophets. As a rule no attempt has been made to separate the political from the social in the background of the prophet's message. This would appear to be desirable, but under conditions of Jewish life it would seem to be hardly necessary or possible. However, it would be impossible to understand the meaning of the social program of a Jewish prophet without taking into account the conditions that produced it. It is believed, also, that every man is influenced in his thinking and public activities by heredity and environment. This makes it highly desirable to know as much as possible about the life of each of the prophets. An attempt has been made to reconstruct the historical background, and to present all the salient facts that appear in the life of each prophet. With these facts before us, it is much easier to get the proper social perspective for an understanding of the prophet's real meaning.

This study also frankly assumes that the social message of the Jewish prophet *was intended for his own times.* Each had in mind a real and present situation. This fact limits the application of the prophet's social message in two ways. In the first place, the social program of the prophets does not include the social problems that have grown out of new conditions that did not exist in their time. In the second place, there were, in the days of the prophets, acute social problems to which they directed their attention and which have either found solution, or changing conditions have made unimportant. On the other hand, there were incipient social situations, like slavery, which were later to grow into serious problems that baffled the reformers of many generations, but which received scanty attention at the hands of the prophets.

It is hardly necessary to say that the author does not claim great originality for the views expressed in this book. The footnotes and list of readings at the end of each chapter will reveal the fact that many volumes have been referred to in the preparation of the book. However, the diversity of opinions of Bible scholars and the fragmentary nature of the social material has made it necessary to choose between conflicting views, and to collect the social data largely by independent effort. An attempt has been made to preëmpt the prophetic literature of its social content, and let it convey its own message. The author hopes that in the task he has not made omissions of important data.

The book is offered as a guide to individual students and Bible classes who may be interested in the

social approach to prophetic literature. With this purpose in view, a few topics for reports and investigations and a carefully selected list of books are added at the end of each chapter. These may serve the purpose of either intensifying or broadening the scope of study.

Finally, I wish to express my appreciation to Dr. C. P. Fountain, Professor of English, and Mr. Charles E. Friley, Registrar, both of the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas, for assistance in reading the proof and preparing the index. It is a pleasure to acknowledge the assistance rendered by these gentlemen.

W. B. B.

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INTRODUCTION

We have come to understand, more clearly than ever before, that the interests of the individual are best promoted through his relationships. This social doctrine is not new in the world. The Creator proclaimed it when he said, " It is not good that man should be alone." This conception predicated a science of society, but its formulation was destined to be long delayed. Science implies a group of facts that relate to a division of natural phenomena; the common attributes of these facts permit of their classification, and the generalizations that the process of collection reveals supply the incentive of scientific effort. Sociology, as the science of society, attempts to collect the facts of society, and to weave them into a system of related phenomena. The field of investigation includes the nature, origin, history, structure, and institutions of society. Obviously, the experiences of many generations were necessary before much thought was given to human relationships. The Hebrews were the first people to face seriously the problem of a social situation, and to recognize the advantages of a well-ordered society. It is surprising that the sociologist did not earlier recognize the rich content of Hebrew institutions as a source of important data for his field of investigation.

I

The term "biblical sociology" seems to have been first used by Professor Shailer Mathews, of the University of Chicago, in the *Biblical World* for January, 1895.[1] Four years later, Professor Frantz Buhl, of the University of Leipzig, published his "*Die Socialen Verhaltnisse der Israeliten.*" The emphasis of this book is on the social institutions of Israel, and the point of view represents a distinct departure in the study of biblical history. In 1901, Day's "The Social Life of the Hebrews" appeared. In the following year, Professor George A. Barton, of Bryn Mawr College, published an important volume entitled "A Sketch of Semitic Origins: Social and Religious."[2] In 1909, Professor Ferdinand S. Schenck, of the Theological Seminary of the Reformed Church in America, published his "The Sociology of the Bible." The "Sociological Study of the Bible," by Louis Wallis, appeared in 1912. Previous to the appearance of the two latter volumes, there was an increasing number of articles and volumes on biblical themes that gave more or less emphasis to the sociological content of the Bible.

It is not to be inferred that the functional viewpoint of biblical study had its beginning with the appearance of these volumes. Obviously, it would

[1] See Wallis' "Sociological Study of the Bible" (1912), p. 299.

[2] G. A. Smith's "Books of the Twelve Prophets" (Expositor's Bible Series) appeared in 1906. While the title does not indicate the social emphasis of this volume, few books have appeared that treat so completely the social content of the prophetic literature.

be difficult to determine the date that marked the beginning of this movement, for the sociological point of view must have long preceded printed articles and volumes relating to the subject. *Religious sociology is not synonymous with biblical sociology.* In logical development, the latter may be said to be the product of the former. Comte, who was the first to use the word "sociology," takes, as his starting point, the idea of religion. "Since religion embraces all our existence, its history must be an epitome of the whole history of our development."[3] Herbert Spencer devotes more than half of Volume I of his "Principles of Sociology" to a study of religious sociology. The papers that compose this volume were written between 1874 and 1876. Spencer's approach was from the standpoint of social evolution. His method was antagonistic to the traditional methods of Bible study, and for the time being retarded rather than promoted "biblical sociology." But the influence of Spencer appears in a volume by John Fenton published under the title: "Early Hebrew Life: A Study in Sociology." This volume appeared in England in 1880, and the author attempts to trace the parallel between the social evolution of the institutions of the Hebrews and that of other historic peoples. A volume by Professor W. Robertson Smith, of Cambridge, entitled, "Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia," and published in 1885, more clearly reveals Spencer's influence. With the adoption of the method of Spencer and Comte by students of religion, it was but a natural consequence that the Bible should come in for its share

[3] Edward Caird's "The Social Philosophy of Compte," p. 20.

of attention by religio-sociological investigators.

The content of biblical sociology is difficult to define at this stage of its development. Social origins and social institutions,[4] social legislation,[5] social pathology[6] and the social attitudes of Jesus, discussed in many familiar volumes, are representative of the phases of the subject thus far developed in a more or less satisfactory way. The social teachings of the prophets relate to family, economic, political, and religious institutions, with special reference to the pathological conditions that characterized these institutions. It is obvious that the Bible has not yet been preëmpted of its social content.

II

The cause of biblical sociology has been stimulated and promoted by the scientific methods of the modern historian. The primary aim of the historian is to ascertain *facts*. The *relations* of these facts are a secondary problem of the historian. The primary problem is one of analysis — the separation of fact from fable, experience from romance.

The secondary problem is one of synthesis — the determination of the relations, each to the other, of the facts. The sociologist must rely upon the historian for his facts. If these facts be vitiated with an element of myth, obviously the sociologist who relies on them must arrive at wrong inductive conclusions. The German historian's motto, "*Was war, wie es war*" (What was, as it was), gains sig-

[4] Soares' "The Social Institutions of the Bible," pp. 19–27.

[5] Schaeffer's "Social Legislation of the Ancient Semites" (1915).

[6] Schenck's "The Sociology of the Bible," Chap. 19.

nificance with the larger use that is now being made of the data that the historian collects. Not only the sociologists, but all social scientists must rely upon the accuracy of the facts of history. Niebuhr and his successors in Germany have contributed largely to a real science of society. The application of this Germanic doctrine to biblical history will assist the sociologist in evaluating the experiences of Hebrew life and conduct.

The historian's problem of establishing the connections between facts almost identifies his field with that of the sociologists. The correspondence, however, is not co-extensive. It is more accurate to say that they overlap to a certain extent. With increasing complexity, human experience passes through four phases: first, the analytic, or the process by which the facts are isolated from myth and romantic elements; second, the synthetic, or the process of connecting the facts into complete experiences; third, the evaluative, or the estimate that is placed on the facts; fourth, the constructive, or the control and direction of the facts.[7] The first phase is the exclusive province of history; the second is the joint province of history and sociology; the third and fourth are within the exclusive province of sociology.

History, in its exclusive sphere, must take account of facts that relate to two classes of experiences — those that are common to all peoples and those that are peculiar. We are told sometimes that "History repeats itself." That is only a partial truth. There are constant elements in history, and these

[7] Small's "The Meaning of Social Science," p. 186.

have constituted the subject matter of many sciences, as, for example, comparative law, comparative religion, and comparative government.[8] But history reveals its distinct and individual elements, and the process of relating these to the constant elements is the method used by the historian to vitalize and individualize his subject matter. It is hardly necessary to say that these unique elements lie outside the province of sociology. To attempt to make them the province of sociology would be to make a science of sociology impossible, for no generalization of importance that had to rely on such data would be possible.

In the present study, the historical situation has been presented as a background against which a social program has been constructed. The accuracy of the facts has not been questioned, except in so far as the best historical authority has been followed. It happens that, in many cases, the accuracy of the descriptive facts is corroborated by the social appeals of the prophet. The biblical historian needs to check the facts of history with the proclamations of the contemporaneous prophet. That this method has been followed by the best historians is evident to the discerning student.

That the Jewish prophet had the point of view of the sociologist is evident from his constant efforts to evaluate the experiences through which his people were passing. He did not stop with a mere estimate of these experiences — he often attempted to control the facts by proclaiming and advocating a constructive program. History and prophecy ex-

[8] Giddings' "Inductive Sociology," p. 8.

emplify, in the highest degree, the modern formulation of the relation of scientific history to sociology.

III

There are at least two ways of presenting the social teaching of the Jewish prophets. One way would be to take each social concept and trace it, in successive relation, to each of the prophets who advocated it. For example, we might trace the concept "social justice," as advocated in succession by Amos, Hosea, Micah, Isaiah, and Jeremiah. This method has the advantage of giving distinctness and emphasis to the various social concepts, and perspective also would be given to the growth of the concept. There would, however, be this disadvantage: the concepts presented would, necessarily, be more or less detached from one another and from their exponents. Besides, this method would prevent the presentation of the complete social program of the prophet. It has been thought best, therefore, to adopt the method of presenting the social program of each prophet, in so far as he had a program, in succession. In this way it is comparatively easy to relate the prophet to the social and political situation, and thus bring his social teaching into clear relief.

There are two other considerations that have had a bearing upon the plan of presenting the social conceptions of the prophets. In the first place, the social concepts as conceived by the prophets do not present themselves in successive stages of social evolution. Referring again to the concept "social justice," we know that this is an advanced factor in the scheme of social progress, yet Amos, the first of the

writing prophets, conceived it more clearly and applied it more accurately to his social environment than did any of his successors. The relation of this concept to civil and political justice has been well presented by Lester F. Ward:

"Now the justice of which we have been speaking, vast as its influence has been in securing man's moral advance, is after all only civil and political justice. It is a very different thing from social justice. The civil and political inequalities of men have been fairly well removed by it. Person and property are tolerably safe under its rule. It was a great step in social achievement. But society must take another step in the same direction. It must establish social justice. The present social inequalities exist for the same reason that civil and political inequalities once existed. They can be removed by an extension of the same policy by which the former were removed. The attempt to do this will be attacked and denounced, as was the other, but the principle involved is the same. And after social justice shall have been attained and shall become the settled policy of society, no one will any more dare to question it than to question civil justice." [9]

It is easy to see that the concept "social justice" did not evolve in the prophet's mind in sequence to civil and political justice. It presented itself in the thinking of Amos as a full-grown idea. Therefore an effort to treat it as a product in an evolutionary process is impossible.

The other consideration that seems to make the present plan of presentation preferable is the frag-

[9] "Applied Sociology," p. 24.

mentary nature of the social messages of some of the prophets. For example, the message of Amos is rich in social content while it is almost negligible in Nahum. The social situation that confronted the prophets in successive eras made their social programs differ widely. At best, the social schemes of all the prophets did not include a synthesis of all the divisions of human welfare. Of the six grand divisions, as summarized by Professor Small,[10] the prophets recognized only four in the following group:

1. Achievement in Promoting Health.
2. Achievement in Producing Wealth.
3. Achievement in Harmonizing Human Relations.
4. Achievement in Discovery and Spread of Knowledge.
5. Achievement in the Fine Arts.
6. Achievement in Religion.

The prophets' largest emphasis was on the last factor in this group, but the third factor came in for a large share of attention. The production of wealth and the spread of knowledge were less significant in the prophets' scheme of achievement. The other two — the promotion of health and attention to the fine arts — were not a part of the social consciousness of the prophets' time. Obviously, many phases of the other four divisions of human welfare were unknown properties during the period of prophetic activity.

IV

The plan of study predetermines a logical method

[10] "General Sociology," p. 718.

of investigation. A comprehension of the teachings of the prophets, whether prophetic or social, involves a careful study of the historical record and prophetic writings. By a process of analysis the special material is separated, and the method of synthesis is applied in weaving this material into unity. The classification of this material into a system involves the application of the inductive method which lies close to synthesis in every logical scheme. A study of the social teaching of a prophet, therefore, involves, first, the collection of all the material from every source of his social message, and, secondly, the shaping of this material into a system or social program.

Induction is the chief reliance of sociological investigation,[11] but the other methods of scientific research cannot be ignored in any scheme that has for its object the construction of a social program. The three logical processes herein indicated are absolutely necessary in the construction of the social program of any writer who has himself failed to arrange the content of his thoughts into a definite system. Obviously, the prophets were not consciously sociologists. In the process of analysis, therefore, the student is constantly confronted with the question: "Did the prophet have a social message?" With the affirmative answer to this question comes another question of equal importance: "*What* sociology did the prophet advocate?" The first question cannot be answered until a patient study has been made of all the sources of his material. The second question cannot be answered until this material has been collected

[11] Giddings' "Inductive Sociology," p. 10.

and systematized. The correctness of the investigator's conclusions will depend on the reliability of the historical data and fidelity to scientific method.

Accuracy in evaluating the prophetic literature is very important in view of the influence that the teachings of the prophets are exerting on the modern world. More and more the prophets are being quoted as authorities on social questions. The social principles proclaimed by them are finding new applications to present world conditions.

A group of men with such an influence needs to be correctly understood. This means that their messages need to be accurately interpreted to the modern world. The contents of this volume are offered as a modest contribution to a better understanding of the thought and motive of the Jewish prophet.

CHAPTER I

THE BEGINNING OF JEWISH PROPHECY

Moses has the distinction of being the first of the Jewish prophets.[1] The Hebrew word, "*nabi*," which means "prophet," had been used in a general sense before,[2] but the term is applied to Moses in exactly the same sense that we find it used in referring to the great moral and religious leaders of a later age.[3] We also find the method he used and his dependence on Jehovah very similar to that which characterized the prophets of later times.[4] A brief study of Moses, the prophet, will mark the starting point for subsequent studies.

SOURCES OF FACTS IN THE LIFE OF MOSES

The commonly accepted facts about the life of Moses are contained in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, four of the five books which are known as the Pentateuch. These have usually been called the "Five Books of Moses." However, it is impossible to tell just how much of the writings contained in these five books can be attributed to him. The contents of these books would lead us to believe that they represent facts and record human experiences that must have extended over much more than a single generation. These books contain

[1] Deut. 34: 10.
[2] Gen. 20: 7.
[3] Jer. 7: 25.
[4] Num. 11: 25.

legal systems that must have developed through long years of Hebrew history. The system of worship, the social adjustments and political customs, all lead to the conclusion that a comparatively long period was represented in the recorded facts of these books.

But the view that Moses probably did not write all of these books does not justify the conclusion that he did not write any part of them. Cornill declares that we know absolutely nothing of Moses. "All original records are missing; we have not received a line, not even a word, from Moses himself, or from any of his contemporaries; even the celebrated Ten Commandments are not from him, but, as can be proved, were written in the first half of the seventh century between 700 and 650 B. C. The oldest accounts we have of Moses are five hundred years later than his time." [5] The internal evidence does not support this sweeping conclusion. Certain sections specifically lay claim to Mosaic authorship.[6] The many public addresses found in Deuteronomy are explained with least difficulty by accepting them as being Mosaic deliverances.

The record, as far as we can determine it, seems to support the view that the facts connected with the life of Moses and his public utterances were handed down by oral tradition, and these traditions seem to have come from four different sources. They were: (1) A compilation of earlier traditions, written about the middle of the ninth century in the Kingdom of Judah, and recorded in what has been called the Judean or *Jahvistic* documents; (2) a compilation widely circulated in the Northern Kingdom, written

5 Ex. 17: 14; 24: 4. 6 "The Prophets of Israel," p. 17.

about a century later (750 B. C.), and called the *Elohistic* (E) documents; (3) a priestly document that seems to have been written during the reign of Josiah about 621 B. C., and called the Deuteronomic (D) documents; and (4) a priestly document (usually called the P documents) that is credited to the fifth century. All these documents have been combined to make up the sources in the life and work of Moses. That these various records and documents reflect accurately many facts and utterances of this great law-giver and prophet can hardly be denied; but, on the other hand, we are doubtless safe in asserting that, in the historic stretch of years over which these records extended, there crept into them many religious conceptions, social ideals, and moral principles that developed after the death of Moses, but which, under the all-prevailing spell of hero worship, were attributed to the first of the prophets.

EARLY LIFE OF MOSES

The sources on which we must rely for the facts in the life of Moses tend to idealize this great moral leader, and probably are overdrawn at various points, but they are serviceable in giving the Jewish conception of this great man.

The narrator traces the sojourn of the Hebrew clans in Canaan and the incidents connected therewith. The conditions that lead to the removal to the land of the Pharaohs are vividly portrayed. The friendly reception, because of the high position held by Joseph, a kinsman, is carefully related, and then follows a brief account of the gradual unfriendliness of the Egyptians toward all foreigners, which ulti-

mately resulted in the Hebrews' being reduced to a state of serfdom, in which condition they were compelled to perform the most burdensome labor upon the engineering works of the king in the various projects that he undertook to promote. Rameses II is supposed to have been the Pharaoh of the oppression, although this is not mentioned on the monuments of the country. The hardships of the Hebrews grew increasingly hard until the climax came with the edict which was sent forth to destroy all the male children of Hebrew parentage.

It was at this crisis in Hebrew affairs that Moses was born. The remarkable narratives recorded in Exodus regarding his birth, his romantic escape from death, his adoption by the Egyptian princess, and his education in the midst of the court of kings and princes are too familiar to need rehearsing here. After making due allowance for the compiler's credulity, it is safe to assume that, in the essential features, the narrative may be accepted as a reliable biography.

EXPERIENCES IN MIDIAN

By the time Moses had reached manhood he had become aware of the wrongs and injustice to which his people had been subjected, and he seems to have been deeply interested in the problem of relieving them of their hard estate. He appears to have taken some steps and planned some measures for their relief, although we cannot tell just how far he attempted to carry these relief measures at this time. The important fact in this connection is that he was not prepared for the great task that confronted him.

He had had a large opportunity for education and luxury in the court of Pharaoh, but this in itself had probably unfitted him for the task of leadership and reform. As we shall so often see in the lives of the prophets that followed him, he needed to experience some of the hardships, and to learn first hand some of the conditions of life with which he was called upon to deal. This opportunity came in an unexpected way. Upon seeing an Egyptian task-master strike a Hebrew laborer, Moses' anger was so great as to cause him to slay the Egyptian, and hide his body in the sand. This made it necessary for Moses to flee from the land.

His flight took him to the east of the Gulf of Akabah, in the region of Midian,[7] where he took refuge with a nomadic tribe. This is a deeply significant fact in the life of Moses. Here he found a home, and after a time married the daughter of the *sheikh*, and began to live the simple life of a shepherd. Somewhere in this region was the mount of Sinai or Horeb. Unconsciously, Moses was becoming familiar with a region that was to play a large part in the history of his people under his leadership. But even more interesting and important is the conclusion reached by some that Moses first learned the name "*Yahveh*" while an exile in this region.[8]

Thus had Moses acquired the essential preparation for the task that confronted him. His edu-

[7] Ex. 2: 15; 4: 28.

[8] Cornill declares that the name of God ("*Yahveh*") had no obvious Hebrew etymology. He then proceeds to show that the word must have been of Arabic origin, and concludes as follows: "The Sinai peninsula belongs linguistically and ethnographically to Arabia, and when we keep all these facts

cation was at last complete. He had acquired knowledge of the geography of the section through which he was to lead his people; he had experienced some of the hardships of primitive and rural life, and, above all, he had gained possession of a name that was to become sacred and significant in the religious life of his people.

He was now prepared for his call to duty, which came in the burning bush that failed to be consumed. He interpreted the symbol, and in reverent silence accepted the sacred call to service. He at once thought of the hopes and promises cherished by his people: that they were destined to return and possess the land of Canaan, and that they were not to be consumed when called upon to oppose powerful nations who possessed the land. He was now ready to return and assist his people to realize the symbolism in his call to service, and he was to carry to his people a new name that they were to reverence. Heretofore, they had known their God by the colorless title of "*Elohim*," a general name for deity; now they were to give him the personal name of "*Jahveh*," the giver of every blessing, the personal Jehovah of men and nations.

SOCIAL MESSAGE OF MOSES

When Moses again appeared in Egypt, after years spent in Midian, he was matured and disciplined. He returned as a social reformer and leader. He did not

before us the conviction is forced upon us that Yahveh was originally the name of one of the gods worshiped on Mount Sinai, which from the earliest times was considered holy, and that Moses adopted this name, and bestowed it on the God of Israel, the God of their fathers."

seek to better their condition by urging radical reforms and advocating political changes, but realizing the futility of such a plan, he set about the task of removing his people from the land, as Jehovah had commanded. His final triumph in the accomplishment of this undertaking, after almost insurmountable difficulties, is familiar to every Bible student. The Exodus [9] was the first achievement of Moses and his first social victory, for the people had been saved from the oppression of the Egyptians. Their needs, however, were now greater than ever before. Their social problems now became more internal than external. The long years spent in the desert were used by Moses in making those social and religious adjustments so essential to the future tasks and trials of his people.

The great work of Moses ended when the people were led to the east bank of the Jordan, ready to enter the land of Canaan. His achievement probably exceeded that of any other character of history. He took a people in the status of enslaved serfs; he left them a free people. He found them weak and without confidence; he left them self-assertive and sure. He found them a heterogeneous mass of individuals; he left them a homogeneous people, prepared to unite into a nation.

But, in exalting the hero, we must not ignore the hero's material. Moses did not give to Israel its religion; that the people already possessed, and it was a religion superior to all others that existed at the time. Israel had never had a mythology, their deity was never differentiated sexually, human sacrifice was

[9] Ex. 4: 29; 15: 21.

unknown, and the degradation of woman had no religious sanction. A people with such a religion offered to the reformer greater possibilities than a pagan people with idolatrous practices and a degraded animalism. However, Moses contributed much of the ethical and social element to this religion and gave new applications of their religion to social adjustments. The importance of the contribution of Moses to the religion of Israel was duly recognized by the author of Deuteronomy, who declared that, "*There hath not arisen a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom Jehovah knew face to face.*" [10]

TOPICS FOR REPORTS AND INVESTIGATION

1. A Study of the Sources in the Life of Moses.
2. Moses' Midian Experience as a Preparation for his Life's Work.
3. Moses' Contribution to the Religion of Israel.
4. Social Elements in the Legal System of the Hebrews.
5. Social Conditions in Egypt during the Age of Moses.

FURTHER READINGS

Blakie's "Bible History"; Wade's "Old Testament History"; Kent's "Heroes and Crises of Early Hebrew History (Historical Bible) chapters XXI, XXVI; Cornill's "The Prophets of Israel," pp. 16-26 on "The Religion of Moses"; article on "Religion of Israel" in Hasting's "Bible Dictionary"; articles on Moses in encyclopedias and Bible dictionaries.

[10] Deut. 34: 10.

CHAPTER II

THE PROPHET AS NATION-BUILDER

The death of Moses came not far from 1200 B. C., and soon thereafter the clans of Israel crossed the Jordan and attempted to occupy the land of Canaan. It probably required more than a century from the time the Hebrews first gained a foothold in Canaan until they were able even to begin to secure an established government. The story of the occupation is vividly described in the first and second chapters of the Book of Judges, which by some is regarded as the oldest book in the Bible. We have here a vivid account of the desperate struggle that Israel made to gain a permanent foothold in the country. We find that there was little unity of action. The tribe of Judah drifted to the south, the two clans of Joseph gained a foothold in the central section, while the other tribes were scattered in various sections of the country. After years of struggle, in which these clans experienced alternately victory and defeat, the conquest was complete over the Canaanites and Israel secured control of the country.

THE AGE OF TRANSITION — THE JUDGES

The period between the beginning of nationality and the actual establishment of the kingdom was characterized by a new order of leadership. Long after Israel had gained supremacy in Canaan the

antagonisms and conflicts with the native population continued. This was naturally to be expected. The Canaanite civilization was much older than that of the Hebrews, and in many respects it possessed superior elements of strength. We would expect the social conflict to continue until the two civilizations amalgamated through intermarriage, or until one race was completely destroyed by the other. The perils incident to this struggle developed here and there some leader of note whose achievements exalted him above his fellow men. These local heroes later acquired the title of judges, but their functions were rather those of military leaders than of judicial officers. These judges did not follow each other in succession, and there was no official relation between them. Two or more often exercised their functions at the same time, in different tribes, and there were, doubtless, considerable intervals in which there was no one who claimed title to the office. They were not of equal prominence, for some, by virtue of unusual powers or achievements, gained wider fame than others. Among these were *Othniel* of Judah, *Deborah* and *Barak* of Issachar, *Gideon* of Manasseh, *Jepthah* of Gilead, and *Samson* of Dan. These men were not great moral leaders and reformers, but were devoted to the national God of their people, and doubtless some of them possessed real religious feeling. However, the great need of the time was the appearance of a prophet like Moses who would exalt the name of Jehovah, and weld the people into a nation.

THE PROPHET SAMUEL

Samuel was raised up to fulfill this mission. He

marks the transition from judge to prophet, as Moses marked the change from law-giver to prophet. The story of the second great prophet of Israel is recorded in the first of the two books that bear his name, although he is not the author but the hero. The four books of Samuel — Kings are really one continuous prophetic record which interestingly interweaves biography and history. These books furnish us our first great experiment in nation building, and some of the leaders connected with the process deserve an imperishable fame. Samuel, who was one of these, was born in the village of Ramah, which is located a short distance southwest of Bethel and about twelve miles to the south of Shiloh. He was the son of Elkanah, a priest, and therefore of Levitical descent. His mother, Hannah, had sought from God the gift of a son for a long time, as she was childless; so when the son was born she called him *Samuel*, " the asked," or " heard of God." The early life of this promising child is briefly summarized in the following words: " *The child Samuel grew on, and was in favor both with the Lord, and also with men.*"

The judgeship of Samuel may be said to have begun immediately after the close of the disastrous battle of Aphek, in which the Philistines totally defeated the Hebrews. The ark, which had been carried into the battle by superstitious priests, was also lost. Shiloh was destroyed, and many of the priests were slain. The people were hopelessly discouraged at this disaster, and a grave crisis confronted them, for they were left without moral or political leadership. It was at this time that Samuel assumed leadership

as the judge and adviser of his people. He aroused the Hebrews to a new sense of their power by stimulating their faith and hope. He gathered the clans and imparted to them a new sense of duty and power, and, as a result of his efforts, Ebenezer won a triumphant victory,[1] and the Philistines were conquered and subdued when the Hebrews were attacked at Mizpah.

Doubtless the influence of Samuel as a prophet was made possible because of his work as a judge in Israel. His influence was great, for we are told that "the word of Samuel came to all Israel." [2] He has been called the first of the prophets.[3] His twenty years as prophet to his people is briefly told in three verses of scripture,[4] but there is much we can infer from other passages. He seems to have made regular circuits [5] to the hill towns of central Palestine, and remained for a time at each, giving instruction to the people, and exalting before them the name of Jehovah, the national God of Israel. The important towns of Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah were frequently visited by him because they were easily accessible to the people of the neighboring districts, and their early connection with religious rites made them popular centers for moral instruction.

We cannot with certainty determine the actual results of the visits of Samuel to these various religious centers. It is certain that he exercised both the office of judge and prophet, and doubtless the prestige of the former made his influence as prophet

[1] Sam. 7: 5–12.
[2] Sam. 4: 1.
[3] Acts 3: 24.
[4] Sam. 7: 2-4.
[5] Sam. 7: 2-4, 15-17.

more effective, for at this time prophecy had not gained a commanding place in the estimation of the people. But certainly the exercise of the functions of both offices was not inconsistent in Israel, for patriotism and religion were one with the Hebrews. Loyalty to the nation was inseparably connected with loyalty to Jehovah. Samuel saw that the supreme need of his people was national unity, and he sought to accomplish this by establishing a common faith and worship of Jehovah, the God of Israel. This was to be followed by the selection of a common leader for all the tribes and clans among the Hebrew people. Samuel knew the power of public opinion, and he was a correct observer of the changing conceptions of the people, for, when he had secured national recognition of the worship of Jehovah, we see him taking the second step, which brought into existence the kingdom of Israel and created a political state on the basis of a theocracy. This transition is one of the most interesting events of history.

SAUL CHOSEN KING

In the beginning of the public ministry of Samuel it would have been impossible to unite the Hebrews under one king. The situation at that time is well summarized in a sentence found in the Book of Judges: "There was no king in Israel in those days, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes."[6] But the prophet through his labors had brought about a marvelous change in public opinion. The people had been brought to see the com-

[6] Judges 17: 6; 21: 25.

mon danger that threatened them if they remained disunited, and the great opportunities that awaited them if they united their strength in a common cause. When this opportunity came, Samuel had reached old age, and he decided to name his sons, according to precedent, as his successors. They proved unworthy, however, and on account of their dishonesty and corruption, were promptly repudiated by the people, whom Samuel had already trained to cherish higher ideals. The logic of events pointed to the next step. Other nations, such as Egypt, Syria, Moab, and Edom had kings —"Why would not such a plan be wise for us?" This thought, no doubt, had long been in the mind of Samuel. Did Samuel possess the ambition to be the first king of his people? Was he fearful that such a great civil power would separate the people from the worship of Jehovah? Was there the fear that a military leadership would supersede the leadership of the prophet? These questions are left unanswered except in so far as future action lifts the veil of doubt.

There are three different accounts of the choosing of Saul as king of Israel, and each is instructive and of peculiar interest. Samuel occupies an important place in each, but the real attitude of Samuel was not the same in each of the three records.

(1) In the first account, Saul was chosen by Samuel privately at Ramah, where he had gone to consult the seer while on a journey in search of his father's asses. His surprise was so great that he could not believe the announcement of the prophet. The reality of the situation was impressed on him by certain signs that were revealed to him on his

way home, but his appointment lacked confirmation by the whole people. This came later on, when Jabesh-Gilead, a Hebrew town on the east side of the Jordan, was besieged. Saul, in his own name and that of Samuel, called the warring forces of Israel together and forced the enemy to raise the siege. This gave Saul preëminence and popularity, and he was immediately proclaimed king of the people. In this entire narrative the attitude of Samuel is one of approval of the choice of Saul as king, and he seemed to have regarded it as the final product of all his labors.[7]

(2) In the second account, Saul is chosen by lot. In this record we have some justification for believing that Samuel was disappointed that he was not made king.[8] He seems here to have regarded the demand for a king as unjustifiable, and a manifestation of a lack of appreciation for his endeavors, and disloyalty to Jehovah. In this account the people made their request to the prophet for a king, and he seems to have reluctantly acceded to their requests. When the people assembled at Mizpah, to which place Samuel had summoned them, Saul was chosen by lot.[9]

The apparent discrepancy in these accounts may be easily explained by noting the different points emphasized in each. In the first account, emphasis is laid upon the kingship as the product of the needs of the people for central authority and national leadership. In the second, the writer is alluding to the danger that threatens Israel if it depends more upon the new form of government and political leadership

[7] I Sam. 9. [8] I Sam. 8: 1-22. [9] I Sam. 10: 17-24.

than upon faith in Jehovah. This two-fold point of view is the best possible evidence of the substantial accuracy of both accounts as valid historical data.

(3) In the third account, Saul is described as having been made king by public acclaim because of a heroic deed.[10] He had led the Hebrew forces to victory against the Ammonites, who had besieged the town of Jabesh-Gilead on the east side of the Jordan. His successful leadership raised him to the rank of a hero, and the people immediately assembled at Gilgal, and made Saul king of Israel. Here the commanding influence of Samuel is clearly revealed. The people first consulted him about the advisability of making Saul king, and the prophet seems to have tested the faith of the hero before giving an answer. The response of Saul seems to have been satisfactory, for Samuel took the initiative in arranging for the ceremonies of coronation at Gilgal, and gave his hearty approval to all of them.

It is not the purpose of this study to follow the fortunes of the kings of Israel, but a further word is necessary to complete the record of Samuel as the founder of the kingdom. The history of Saul's reign is far from complete, but there is sufficient evidence for us to determine the policy of his reign. He was not willing to follow the advice of Samuel, which was to magnify the name of Jehovah in his kingdom. For this reason Samuel withdrew his support,[11] and later expressed bitter grief that he had approved of making Saul king.[12] But he did not give up the idea of establishing a permanent kingdom, for he began immediately to seek a successor to Saul. He

[10] I Sam. 11: 15. [11] I Sam. 13: 8. [12] I Sam. 15: 11.

sought to prevent a successor from Saul's family by the selection of David, the youngest son of Jesse, whom the Lord approved,[13] and immediately "the spirit of the Lord departed from Saul," and the power and influence of David increased from that day until he was finally invited to be king and his capital was established at Hebron.

Thus did Samuel bring into existence the kingdom of Israel as an established government, but his work is of much greater significance than even that, for, in making David king, he established the beginning of the spiritual kingdom that was to be revealed and perpetuated in Jesus, the Christ.

SAMUEL AS SOCIAL REFORMER

It is not contended that Samuel consciously had in mind any social program in his work as prophet. This can hardly be said to be true of any prophet of Israel, but a student of the Bible cannot fail to see that Samuel made distinct contributions to social order. His fundamental contributions consisted in directing the energies of the people to the establishment of political unity and social security through a military organization. This is what Professor Giddings,[14] has characterized as the first of the three great stages in the evolution of civil societies. Samuel accomplished this task by exactly

[13] I Sam. 16: 11-13.

[14] The three stages in the evolution of civil societies as described by Giddings may be stated as follows: (1) Military organization, where there is little or no friendly relation with similar societies; (2) the stage of intellectual and personal freedom; (3) economic and ethical freedom. See Principles of Sociology, p. 300.

the same methods that are used by the modern social reformer. He aroused public opinion by appealing to the loftier motives of the people. In an age when the world was ruled by primitive force, Samuel taught his people that spiritual power was more effective than martial strength, and he sought to substitute the former for the latter. He did not completely accomplish his task for the principle was too new in the world, but his people never entirely lost sight of it, and when the political kingdom that he established had passed away, the Hebrews were still able to make effective use of the spiritual doctrine that he had taught. After all, this spiritual power has made the Hebrews the reigning people of the earth.

Samuel may be said to have been a typical prophet of Israel. As a preacher of righteousness, he denounced the superstitions of the age, and exalted the name of Jehovah; as a moral leader, he taught and exemplified the highest ideals of right living; as a social reformer, he read accurately the signs of the times, and with sane judgment sought to better the conditions of his people. It is not strange that at his death such a man should be mourned by the nation as if it had been left fatherless, for he had made large contributions to the progress and well-being of his people. In the pages that follow we shall trace the life history and the social contributions of other great prophets, but none of these will show greater devotion to the social welfare, or accomplish more for the common good, than Samuel, the Prophet of Ramah.

TOPICS FOR REPORTS AND INVESTIGATION

1. The Work of Samuel as Prophet in Contrast with his Work as Judge.
2. The Strength and Weakness of Saul.
3. Samuel's Contribution to the Religion of the Hebrews.
4. A Study of the Methods of Samuel in his Public Ministry.
5. Foreign Influences on the Destiny of Israel during the Age of Samuel.

FURTHER READINGS

Chamberlain's "The Hebrew Prophets," pp. 8–26; Willett's "The Moral Leaders of Israel," Part One, pp. 33–46; Deane's "Samuel and Saul, their Lives and Times"; Wade's "Old Testament History"; Kent's "History of the Hebrew People"; articles on Samuel and Saul in Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias.

CHAPTER III

SUCCESSORS TO THE PROPHET SAMUEL

The number of names that have come down to us, in connection with Jewish prophecy, is strangely small. The names of a few scattering prophets appear before the eighth century, and in the three or four centuries that follow we have the names of eight or nine.[1] The student is likely to regard the Jewish prophet as an isolated phenomenon. But a careful study of the fragmentary record that has come down to us is sufficient to convince the discerning student that prophets were numerous in the years that intervened between the age of Samuel and the beginning of the exile. The term "prophet" was applied to hundreds in those days, and due recognition was given to them as a separate class in Hebrew society. Those who have had the honor to be so named in the Scriptures are merely unusual types whose surpassing personality, or relation to some unusual event of history, have marked them for special mention. To call attention to some of those whose names appear here and there in the sacred

1 Daniel is not included in the list of prophets here studied. The Book of Daniel does not find a place among the prophets in the Jewish Canon. The material is more appropriately classed as apocalytic rather than prophetic literature. The author of the Book of Daniel does not seem to regard himself as a prophet.

record is the purpose of the present study. An explanatory word as to how the prophet's office developed under Jewish influence will help to explain the commanding position of the Jewish prophet.

TYPES OF THE JEWISH PROPHET

The Jewish prophet seems to have been an evolution. In the process of development three rather distinct types seem to appear, each in succession representing a higher order of intelligence, and exercising a correspondingly larger influence.

(1) In the first type we have the fortune tellers or superstitious diviners. These individuals gained their reputation for wisdom and foresight through certain rites that they performed, or mediums that they used to reveal the divine will and purpose. We get a glimpse of this type in the early writings of sacred scripture. We are told that Joseph was a diviner and that the movements of water in a cup was the medium used.[2] Responses were also sought by means of colors in sacred stones. Saul, having been denied the knowledge of the future outcome of his conflict with the Philistines, sought the result by observing the colors in the sacred stone Urim, which was often used at that time for such purposes. The casting of lots [3] was a common method of ascertaining the divine will. The Hebrews shared with the Assyrian and other nations the belief that dreams and oracles were means of conveying to men the divine will. The seer and prophet first came into public notice through the belief that they had the power, through these various agencies, to foretell the future.

[2] Gen. 44: 5.

[3] I Sam. 14: 41, 42.

They were consulted when articles were lost or domestic animals strayed away, and the seer was rewarded for the information he gave.[4] We get a better example of the influence of the prophet as a diviner of the future in the case of Ahab summoning the prophet to inquire of him the result of his proposed expedition against Ramoth-Gilead.[5]

(2) The second type of prophet was the emotional or ecstatic type. They resorted to the influence of crude music, bodily distortions, and loud and boisterous exclamations, instead of mysterious mediums or other forms of symbolism. They made use of the simple musical instruments of their age, and roamed about in bands, playing and attracting attention by their peculiar gesticulations. These roving bands may have marked the beginning of what later became the schools of the prophets. They seem to have sought to influence the people by playing and dancing until they had worked themselves into a frenzy, and in the end they would become completely exhausted and limp with over-exertion. These strange proceedings seem to have had a rather remarkable influence on the people. For instance, Saul, when he met one of these bands of wandering prophets, was drawn irresistibly into their performances, and, to the surprise of all, joined in their wild and frenzied dance.[6] The real nature of the performances of these prophets is best described in the account of the prophets of Baal at Mt. Carmel.[7] But gradually the people began to lose faith in these prophets, and they came to be regarded almost as

[4] I Sam. 9: 3-8.
[5] I Kings 22: 5, 6.
[6] I Sam. 10: 5-12.
[7] I Kings 18: 26-29.

mad men,[8] and as unworthy of leadership or popular approval as a religious order.

(3) The third type seems to have been merely a higher stage of the second. Gradually the ecstatic type gave up their roving, mendicant life, and gathered in important centers like Ramah, Bethel, and Jericho. Gradually, too, these unlettered and emotional bands were transformed into intelligent men with a fair degree of insight into the political, ethical, and religious needs and conditons of the times. Of course, they did not take rank with such prophets and teachers as Moses or Samuel, their contemporaries, but they were able to perform many of the duties of moral and religious instruction, and their influence must have been widely felt during the century or two that preceded the beginning of the work of the writing prophets. The centers where these prophets made their headquarters gained fame for their intelligence and culture, and gradually became seminaries of religious instruction, which soon took the name of "the schools of the prophets." Samuel has been credited with having organized the schools of the prophets, and defined their relations to the nation and to society.[9] He taught that the members of the prophetic order were not to lead ascetic lives, but they were, on the other hand, to concern themselves with the various problems that confronted the nation and the national faith. The contribution of these early orders of prophets to social policy and religious ideals must have been considerable, and the Bible student must feel a pang of disappointment to find that we are denied the privilege of

[8] II Kings 9: 11. [9] I Sam. 10: 9, 10.

knowing more about the organization and work of these early prophetical societies.

What is the relation of the writing prophets to these early bands of prophetic orders? We may answer by saying that they were merely unusual types of their class. Amos, Hosea, and Micah merely rise above their contemporaries because of their unusual ability to discern the real conditons of their respective times and to attack the social and religious errors of the people with more definite and effective results. These early prophets must have differed widely in their talents and abilities and also in their moral and spiritual capabilities. This fact accounts for the obscurity of most of these prophets, and the world-wide fame of others. Between these extremes, we find, here and there a prophet whose name has come down to us as a representative of those who rose above the masses, but whose achievements did not entitle him to a large or commanding place in the biblical record. But some of these deserve mention as successors to Samuel, and as links in the continuous chain of Jewish prophecy.

NATHAN THE PROPHET

Nathan is to be regarded as the logical successor to Samuel as prophet-statesman of Israel. His relations to the king were very similar to those of Samuel to Saul. He seemed to have regarded his work as that of chief adviser to King David, and David gave great heed to the advice and counsel of the prophet Nathan. His influence made him the most commanding figure at David's court, and it is easy to judge of the king's estimate of this prophet by the

absolute manner in which he accepted his rebukes.

Nathan first appears in connection with the generous plans of David to build a temple in which to shelter the ark of the Lord. The king's motive was so unselfish [10] and the undertaking so laudable that, it seems, Nathan approved the plan. At a later date, however, before David had time to begin the actual work, Nathan reconsidered and advised David to postpone the project indefinitely. It seems that the prophet's reconsideration was based on the belief that David was not quite the right person to build the temple for the Lord because he had been a man of war. The real motive, however, was doubtless more significant than the apparent one assigned by the prophet. Nathan doubtless feared what many later prophets experienced — that to centralize worship and to enrich the liturgical form would decrease its effectiveness and its vitality. For these deeper reasons he thought best to postpone the enterprise until the nation was better organized and the national faith better established. But, on advising the postponement, he gave to David the promise that his seed should be established in Israel and that his successor should carry out his worthy project.

Nathan's most important work was in the lofty ideals of social justice and personal morality that he attempted to impress upon David and the people of Israel. The incident that furnished the opportunity grew out of the seizing of the wife of one of his officers by David and the taking of her into his own harem. This act was fearlessly denounced by Nathan. So forcibly did Nathan present the injustice

[10] II Sam. 7: 2.

of such a deed to David that the king was greatly moved and humiliated. The parable [11] used by the prophet to impress the king, and the profound impression that it made, furnishes us with one of the most interesting social incidents in the history of Jewish prophecy.

But in the interpretation of this incident the Bible student must be careful not to give the wrong meaning to the emphasis in the prophet's rebuke. The aspect of the offence of David that appealed to Nathan was not that of personal immorality, but that of social injustice. This is easily seen from the parable that was used by the prophet. The question of personal immorality had not yet developed in Jewish consciousness, and it was not destined to develop to any great extent until the days of the writing prophets. It is a fact of great interest and importance that we find thus early such a clear conception of social justice, especially between a king and his subjects. This bare incident is sufficient to justify us in numbering Nathan among the important social prophets of Israel.

Nathan appears for the last time in connection with the crowning of Solomon as king of Israel.[12] In this capacity we also see his marked influence on the destiny of his people. His relations to the king were very similar, at every point, to those of Samuel and his great predecessor. Both were largely responsible for national policy because of their commanding influence and their intimate relations with the rulers of the nation. We shall see that their successors attempted at times to shape the national poli-

[11] II Sam. 12: 1-15.

[12] II Sam. 12: 1-4.

cies as well as to direct the social and moral consciousness of the people.

THE PROPHET GAD

Gad,[13] like Nathan, was one of the chief advisers of David. Professor Bennett calls these two prophets "the domestic chaplains and spiritual advisers of David." It was the mission of Gad to reveal to David the displeasure of the Lord because of his sinful pride in taking the census of Israel, and to reveal unto the king the three choices of punishment, one of which he was required to accept.[14] When David had thoroughly repented, Gad again came to him and directed that he build an altar on the threshing floor at Ornan;[15] which he did, and by his penitent worship stayed the calamity that had befallen the land because of his sin. In connection with Nathan, Gad seems to have had an important part in the formulation of the tabernacle service under the general approval of David.[16]

THE PROPHET ABIJAH

Prophecy was silent in Israel after the disappearance of Nathan and Gad until the reign of David had ended and Solomon, his son, had been firmly seated upon the throne. When Solomon began to manifest his despotic power and tyranny over his subjects, there appeared another prophet in Israel to offer

[13] Gad is usually referred to as a "seer" (*"roeh"*) rather than prophet (*"Nabi"*). The words are practically synonymous, but the word "seer" seems to have been the more ancient word. According to strict etymology there was a difference in meaning between the words, but this distinction was lost through common usage.

[14] I Kings 1: 38. [15] II Sam. 24: 10-25. [16] II Chron. 29: 25.

counsel and aid to the oppressed and downtrodden people of Israel. This prophet was Abijah of Shiloah. The king, surrounded by his servile guards and a brilliant court, felt too exalted to listen to the advice or complaints of men of lowly estate. The priests, as we shall often find, seem to have been robbed of their real power and mission by the royal seductions of a court of flattery. In this crisis, Abijah appeared, with the work of Samuel as a precedent, to thwart injustice and to re-establish social order on a new basis.

Abijah selected Jereboam, a brave and ambitious youth of Ephraim, whom he encouraged to rebel against Solomon. The prophet used great tact and dramatic skill in notifying the youth of his selection as the successor of Solomon. It seems that the prophet waited until Jereboam had gone out of the city into the country, perhaps on his way to visit his widowed mother. Abijah made it a point to meet Jereboam on the road, and his first act, which was designed as an impressive symbol, was to take from his own shoulders a new garment that he had provided for the purpose. The prophet then rent the garment into twelve pieces, handing ten of these pieces to Jereboam with the words: "Take these ten pieces; for thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee." [17] These words are followed, however, with words of assurance that one tribe would be left to Solomon's son, that the lamp of Jerusalem might not be extinguished and that the seed of David might not be completely

[17] I Kings 11: 31.

destroyed. This prophecy was literally fulfilled when Rehoboam, Solomon's only son, became the king of Israel and the ten tribes revolted and made Jereboam their king.

Years after the meeting of Jereboam and Abijah on the road way, and after the northern kingdom had been established, Jereboam revealed his faith in the old prophet when the king's son became very ill. The queen was requested to go in disguise to Abijah and seek information as to the outcome of the child's illness. The prophet at once penetrated the queen's disguise, and beckoned her into his presence. He sent a message to Jereboam in which he execrated him for not keeping the commandments of Jehovah, and in closing he predicted that the child would die. With the deliverance of the message and the fulfillment of his prophecy, the name of Abijah disappears from the historic record. Among the early successors of Samuel he is next in importance to Nathan in his social and moral influence. Abijah was in the best sense a social reformer. The two great events recorded of him are connected with social and political reform. To relieve oppression and injustice, when all else had failed, he appeared as the advocate of a divided kingdom. When the new kingdom had been established, and its ruler had forsaken the principles that furnished the justification for it, he lifted his voice in rebuke, foretelling the afflictions that were to come upon the disobedient king.

THE PROPHET SHEMAIAH

Reverting to the history of the southern kingdom of Judah, we find Rehoboam after his elevation to the

throne of Israel ready to attempt to recover the lost part of Solomon's kingdom. He assembled a large army from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, and when the king was about ready to invade Israel, the prophet Shemaiah [18] appeared to thwart the plans of Rehoboam. The prophet speaks as one with authority. "Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren, the children of Israel; return every man to his house; for this thing is from me." [19] The effect of the words of the prophet was remarkable. The expedition was abandoned, and the great army was dispersed. No event of early Jewish history reveals so clearly the commanding importance of the Jewish prophet. To set aside the ambition of Rehoboam, and to set at naught all the plans of a great army of soldiery, involved boldness and courage. The attempt to invade Israel was not again renewed during the reign of Rehoboam.

The abandonment of military ambition enabled Rehoboam to direct his endeavors to the material development of his kingdom. Great prosperity came to him, but we are told that in the hour of his prosperity he forsook the law of the Lord, and to humble him Shishak, king of Egypt, invaded Judah with a large army, and the king was in great fear and distress. At this juncture Shemaiah again appeared, and declared that the invasion by a foreign foe was Jehovah's punishment for his sin and the sins of the princes of Judah. They at once humbled themselves, and Jehovah accepted their penitence. She-

[18] This prophet is not to be confused with two false prophets of the same name and referred to in Neh. 6: 10-14, and Jer. 29: 24-32.

[19] I Kings 12: 24.

maiah was told to convey this message of deliverance, and at the same time he was directed to inform the rulers of his people that they should serve Shishak, "that they [the Jews] may know My service and the service of the kingdoms of the countries." [20] With this public service the prophet Shemaiah disappears from the pages of history.

The three prophets, Nathan, Gad and Abijah, represent the most important prophetic successors to Samuel, and they seem to have been inspired by his example to follow his policies and to adopt his methods. As we have seen, each in turn influenced kings, and directed their policies at critical times. They dignified and gave importance to the work of prophecy. Their patriotism caused them also to become the annalists and historians of the nation. Their farsightedness entitled them to be classed as statesmen and their earnestness and honesty made them the moral leaders of Israel. The work of these prophets made possible the ascendency of prophecy under their immediate successors, whose work will be described in the next chapter.

TOPICS FOR REPORTS AND INVESTIGATION

1. The Function of the Prophet as Revealed in the Study of Samuel's Successors.
2. Justification of Abijah in Encouraging the Division of the Jewish nation.
3. Relations of Egypt and Israel during this Period.
4. The Influence of the Prophet on the Rise of the Monarchy in Israel.
5. The Social Ideals of Samuel's Successors.

[20] II Chron. 2: 8.

FURTHER READINGS

Article on "Prophetic Office in the Old Testament" in the Schaff-Herzog "Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge," Vol. III, p. 1936; Bennett's "First and Second Chronicles" ("Expositor's Bible"), Chap. 9, pp. 241-269 on "The Prophets"; Edersheim's "History of Israel and Judah," Vol. V; articles on Nathan, Gad, Abijah, and Shemaiah in Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias.

CHAPTER IV

THE ASCENDENCY OF PROPHECY

The sudden and dramatic appearance of Elijah before King Ahab, and his remarkable deliverance, marks the beginning of the real ascendency of Jewish prophecy. The importance of Elijah's mission, and his peculiar fitness to fulfill it, raises him and the order which he represented to a place of commanding importance. His contribution to social reform, and his defense of the religion of Jehovah, increased the importance of the office of prophet, and his call of Elisha as his successor gave stability and permanence to the prophetic office. These are some of the reasons why we usually think of prophecy as having begun with Elijah.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Ahab, whose reign began in 875 B. C., was the fifth successor of Jereboam the first king of Israel. Jereboam reigned for more than twenty years, but his immediate successors had short reigns, and each was characterized by intrigue and bloodshed. Nadab, the son of Jereboam, succeeded his father on the throne, but was soon deposed by Baasha, who had no claim whatever to the throne as a royal successor. He was shortly succeeded by his son Elah, who was soon murdered by his servant Zimri, who was in turn driven from the throne by Omri, the head of the

army, who, after a brief civil war, succeeded in founding a new dynasty. His son was Ahab, who ruled Israel for thirty-eight years.

Prophecy is almost silent during all these political changes and upheavals. In the reign of Baasha, which was the longest of the immediate predecessors of Jereboam, we learn of the appearance of the prophet Jehu, the son of Hanani. It appears from his prophecy that Baasha had been favored by the prophets against the rule of Jereboam, but that he had lost their support and confidence because he "had walked in the way of Jereboam, and had made my people Israel to sin."[1] We naturally ask: "Why did the prophets turn against Jereboam, when he had been selected by Abijah as the appropriate man to establish the new kingdom of Israel?" The answer is probably to be found in the fact that Jereboam displayed great unfriendliness towards the prophets when he had once been securely seated upon the throne of the northern kingdom. The prophets not only turned against Jereboam, but they also turned against his son, and in condemning him they felt that the worst that could be said was that "he walked in the way of his father."[2] With these exceptions, the prophets during this period do not seem to have been very active or very influential.

But, unconsciously, there were growing up two hostile and irreconcilable policies in the nation. There was an increasing desire to establish trade relations with neighboring nations, and the advocates of this policy realized that this could not be accom-

[1] I Kings 16: 2. [2] I Kings 15: 26.

plished without first establishing closer social and religious relations. Ahab, who favored the extension of international trade, was willing to comply with all demands necessary for the accomplishment of this result. To this end, he married Jezebel, a Phoenician princess, and freely admitted to Israel the prophets of Baal (Baalim) and Astarte.[3]

Against this policy of the court was the intense opposition of the prophets of Israel, and especially of Elijah, who suddenly emerges as the leader of the prophetic forces. The issue was distinctly defined by the prophet, and the contending forces clearly revealed. The nation was first to manifest complete loyalty to its God, and fidelity to her own social institutions, before being trusted in the field of international trade relations. At this time safety lay in national seclusion. *The issue was clearly one of religious idealism contending against political commercialism.* The ascendency of Elijah was the result of this issue, for

> " Not in their brightness, but their earthly stains,
> Are the true saints vouchsafed to human eyes.
> Sin can read sin, but dimly scans high grace,
> So we move heavenward with averted face,
> Scared into faith by warning of sins' pains;
> And saints are lowered that the world may rise." [4]

SKETCH OF ELIJAH

Truly Elijah is an example of a saint who was " lowered " that the world might rise. Little is known of his parentage except that he was born in a certain locality called Tishbe, believed to have been in

[3] I Kings 16: 31, 32; 18: 19. [4] Newman.

the northern section of the country. But it seems that he lived for a time in Gilead, which is east of the Jordan. While the facts connected with his earlier life are scant, the public career of no other prophet has received such an extended account. Much of the narrative of the books of Kings is devoted to the spectacular life of this prophet, and of Elisha, his successor.

Many of the incidents in the life of Elijah fall outside of a sociological point of view. His sudden appearance before Ahab, and his prophecy of a three years' drought in Israel, followed by his flight and experiences, his miracles, and his contest at Carmel, are in the main incidents connected with the prophet's struggle to restore the true faith, and to destroy the false worship of heathen gods. Elijah saw the insidious influences that would result to Israel if her religious barriers were destroyed. The worship of Baal implied the spread and popular acceptance of foreign luxury and immorality. His task was that of safeguarding the virtues of his people. The incidents recorded about him are mere illustrations of his earnestness and fidelity in attempting to avoid the calamity that he saw awaited his people if they adopted the policy of Ahab and his court.

SOCIAL GLIMPSES

While these recorded incidents in the life of Elijah imply that his conclusions and policies were determined by social considerations, there are three incidents that directly reveal him as a defender of popular rights and the sympathetic friend of the poor.

(1) The first incident is that connected with the unjust treatment accorded Naboth, the farmer of Jezreel. The king sought to enlarge his grounds at his summer capital, and in order to be able to do so it was necessary to buy the vineyard owned by Naboth. The king offered a reasonable price, but Naboth, for sentimental reasons, (it being his ancestral estate), felt that he could not part with it, and he refused the offer of Ahab.

The king, realizing that there was no law to compel Naboth to sell, and fearing openly to dispossess the owner without lawful authority, returned to his palace in disappointment, for, accustomed to having his way, like a spoiled child he could not conceal his displeasure. Queen Jezebel was quick to discern the king's dejection and promptly ascertained the cause. Being more resourceful than her husband, and anxious to vindicate the supremacy of the royal will, Jezebel immediately set about the task of securing the coveted property by foul and impious means. She secured the arrest of Naboth on the charge of impiety and disloyalty. With her own servants as witnesses, it was easy to secure the conviction of Naboth, and a corrupt court decreed death as the penalty. The verdict was speedily carried into execution, and Ahab came into possession of the property, which by the process of law now reverted to the crown.

Up to this point the process seemed easy, but Ahab had Elijah to reckon with at an unexpected moment. Before the king had ceased exulting over his coveted possession, Elijah appeared before him, and with deep indignation at the king's approval of

the wicked methods of his queen, pronounced judgment upon him and his dynasty, and denounced him in the severest terms. Elijah even declared that judgment would be literally meted out to him, saying that Ahab's own blood should be shed on the exact spot where Naboth had been slain.[5]

Elijah here typifies the true reformer who is jealous to maintain the principles of social justice and popular rights. We must marvel at the keen sense of appreciation for the social and legal relations that should exist between men that Elijah manifested, for we find him judging Ahab almost a thousand years before the Christian era by standards that would reflect credit upon the best men of our own generation.

A consequence of the incident of Naboth has been suggested by Mr. Louis Wallis.[6] He suggests that the principles of the Rechabites[7] may be traceable to this incident. "The most characteristic thing about these people was their avoidance of private property in land. They would do nothing which implied ownership in the soil. They planted no seed, because the sowing of seed would make it necessary to possess fields; they drank no wine, because the raising of grapes would make it necessary to own vineyards. Perhaps it was the seizing of Naboth's vineyard by Ahab that suggested their avoidance of land property. They may have reasoned that the private holding of land was at the root of all evil. By this token, if you have no land, the kings and

[5] I Kings 21: 19.

[6] "Sociological Study of the Bible" (1912), pp. 180, 181.

[7] Jer. 35: 2-9. See also article on "Rechabites" in Bible Dictionaries.

nobles can take no land away from you." While this suggestion of Wallis' is interesting, of course, it contains an element of speculation. But a more certain consequence of the dispossession of Naboth is that it made property rights insecure, and it was against this that the prophet protested, as well as against the act of inhumanity connected with it. It is a significant fact that Elijah pronounced the doom of Ahab as a result of the manner of his gaining possession of Naboth's vineyard rather than in connection with the fostering of Baal-worship.

(2) Another sidelight is thrown on the social conceptions of Elijah in connection with his visit to the widow of Zarepath.[8] For some reason the Lord saw fit to direct Elijah to go to Zarepath, a Sidonian city of Phoenicia. Why he should be sent into the midst of these Baal-worshipers, against whom he was protesting, was doubtless strange to the prophet of the Lord. We are told that he had already learned "dependence upon God" when the ravens fed him. He was now to learn "fellowship with him" by sharing in the privations of the unfortunate classes on a plane of equality.

The long journey from his retreat on the Jordan to Zarepath was doubtless made at great peril and privation. His arrival found him hungry and exhausted. The first person whom he saw was a woman gathering sticks, and he asked her for water. Her willingness to minister to his wants encouraged him to ask that she bring him a morsel of bread also. Her answer revealed the fact that she was herself in extreme want, for her total supply of food con-

[8] I Kings 17: 8-24.

sisted of only a handful of meal in the barrel, and a little oil in the cruse.[9] The prophet also learned that she had become despondent and was now ready to die. We are graphically told how Elijah came to this woman's rescue, and miraculously supplied both meal and oil.

Elijah was destined to face yet another problem of social significance in connection with this woman — that of disease and death. The son of the woman fell sick, and at last died, and she felt that Elijah in some mysterious way had taken the life of her son as a rebuke for her sin. The manifestation of her grief and her accusation caused the prophet to appeal to the Lord to restore the child to life, and his prayer was answered.

The entire incident leads us to see that among other things God was here educating Elijah. His chief concern had been for the welfare of the state; he was here to learn the importance of individual needs. In his concern for the welfare of Israel he had come to despise all neighboring peoples; he was here to have his sympathies broadened through an experience which taught him that there was good in other people, even though they worshiped false gods and knew not the ways of the Lord. Elijah was here brought to think of the individual problems of poverty and disease, even at a time when he was grappling with the problem of national faith and civic righteousness. A man's usefulness is often determined by his ability to keep the proper social perspective, and it is probable that this was the need of Elijah at this period of his life.

[9] I Kings 17: 12.

(3) The call of Elisha is the third contribution of Elijah to the social ideals that he fostered. The old prophet by this time had learned many important lessons in his long and varied career. Ahab also had learned that his national policy had been based upon false premises. Instead of friendly alliances and mutual trade relations, had come disputes about boundaries, and war with Syria. Benhadad, king of Syria, had even invaded Samaria, and forced the payment of large tribute by Ahab. Only when the Syrian king threatened the sack of Samaria, the capitol city itself, did Ahab take courage to resist, and he was rewarded with victory over the enemies, who happened to be in a drunken orgy at the time of attack. But Ahab had about reached the end of his career. With the assistance of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, he invaded Syria, and, in the battle of Ramoth-Gilead, was pierced by a random arrow, and died within a few hours. Jehoram, the son of Ahab, succeeded him on the throne, and while he was far from being a righteous ruler, he was wise enough to reverse the foreign policy of his father.[10] Thus, at last, Elijah saw his paramount desire for Israel accomplished. He was now ready to intrust the moral and religious leadership to another, and he was wise enough to see that his successor should possess qualities far different from his own, in this new era into which Israel had entered. God had taught him that now was the time when the power of the *still small voice* was to take precedence over the earthquake in the moral and social conquest of Israel.

For this new leadership, Elijah selected a certain

[10] II Kings 3: 2.

farmer of Abel-meholah, whom he found ploughing in the field near his home. The manner of Elisha's call is told in a few verses.[11] Elijah apprised Elisha of his new calling by casting his mantle upon him, and Elisha seemed to understand, for he immediately asked permission to bid his father and mother good-bye, which was readily granted by the old prophet. He took time before his final departure to prepare a feast, and invite his friends to share his hospitality. When these duties had been performed, he immediately joined Elijah.

Elisha came to his work as the representative of the highest civilization of the days in which he lived. His devotion to his ancestral estate had given him a sense of permanent attachment for the simple life of the farm and the ideals of the home. Unlike Elijah, he was no homeless *Bedawy*. His entire environment was such as to prepare him for the problems of the new era which he was called upon to solve, and these were vastly different from those that had confronted Elijah.

ELISHA

After his call, we hear nothing more of Elisha for six or eight years, when he is again brought into prominence at the time of his master's translation. For a period of more than fifty years following that event, Elisha was the most important figure in the history of his country. His public ministry extended through the reigns of Jehoram (851–842 B. C.), Jehu (842–814), Jehoahaz (814–797), and Joash (797–781). In the midst of the recorded deeds of

[11] I Kings 19: 19-21.

these kings of Israel, as outlined in the Second Book of Kings, the name of Elisha appears as the most important and chief character. His ascendency marks the return of the influence of the prophets over the kings of his country. The renewed predominance of the prophet is seen during the war of the kings of Israel, Judah, and Edom against Moab. During the invasion of Moab they found themselves in the desert without water, and in the midst of their dire distress, Jehosaphat, king of Judah, suggested that all three kings appeal to the prophet of the Lord. They sought out Elisha, who, after a rebuke to Jehoram, king of Israel, ordered them at the direction of the Lord to dig trenches in the valley; on the following morning, the trenches were filled with water. Thus refreshed, these allies were able to resist the onslaughts of the Moabites, and win a signal victory over them. Elisha's opposition to Jehoram resulted in Jehu being anointed by the prophet's servant, and appointed king over Israel.[12] Jehu rewarded the prophet with the destruction of all the Baal-worshipers in his dominion. The influence of Elisha on Jehoahaz does not appear to have been great, for this king's reign was without moral or social importance. But the estimate of the prophet by Joash, uttered when the king visited Elisha on his death bed, is one of the noblest tributes ever paid a public servant. When the king looked into the prophet's face and saw that the end was near, he exclaimed: "My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof," thus giving ex-

[12] II Kings 9: 6, 7.

pression to the thought that Elisha was worth more to Israel than armies of soldiers.

SOCIAL TEACHING OF ELISHA

The social teaching of Elisha is revealed in the domestic experiences recorded of him, rather than in those incidents connected with his relations to the kings of his country. To these we must turn in order to get the larger significance of his public ministry.

The prophet's deep concern for the home as an institution is revealed in two miracles where the contrast is striking and the conditions with which he deals are vastly different. One experience is in connection with a broken home, and the problem is that of poverty and want. The other experience is that of a home of wealth, the problem being that of childlessness. He solves the problem of poverty by multiplying the widow's oil.[13] He meets the second condition by assuring the wife that the Lord will provide her a son, and when this promise is fulfilled, and at a later time this son dies, Elisha returns and restores him to life.[14] This miracle is made the instrument of power to reveal the prophet's concern for the problems of domestic life. Poverty, disease, and death still endanger the happiness of the home. At some time or other, the homes of the rich, as well as those of the poor, must experience the blight of one or the other of these. We have sought to evade or eliminate them by social legislation. Elisha, dealing with similar conditions, adopted another method. But whatever the method, we have the evidence not

[13] II Kings 4: 5-7. [14] II Kings 4: 8-37.

only that these are age-old problems, but that their solutions have ever been deemed of sufficient importance to call out the best efforts of the world's wisest and best men.

The healing of Naaman, the greatest captain of the army of Ben-hadad, king of Syria, is an incident of sociological importance. We are told in the Bible record [15] that Naaman was afflicted with leprosy. An Israelitish maiden, who was a slave in the household of Naaman, told him of the miraculous power of the prophet of Samaria, and the captain, willing to try any method that might result in recovery, came with a retinue and gifts to the king of Israel, seeking the one with the power to heal. The king was suspicious, and feared that Naaman sought again to involve him in war with Syria, but Elisha heard of the visit and sent for the captain of the Syrian hosts. The prophet bade Naaman to go and wash in the Jordan, and to dip seven times. The captain at first hesitated because the water was muddy, but he finally complied with the request, and was fully restored to health. The captain sought to reward Elisha, but the prophet firmly refused to accept any gift from the hands of Naaman.

But Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, possessed none of the magnanimity and broadmindedness of his master. He saw an opportunity to possess for himself some of the gifts that his master had refused. So he hastily set out after the departure of Naaman, and when he had overtaken him, by misrepresentation he did secure some of the money and garments. His covetousness, however, was not to bring happi-

[15] II Kings 5.

ness, for when Elisha became aware of this act of his servant, he caused the leprosy of Naaman to cleave unto his servant. What is the social meaning of this incident? We answer that happiness can never come from covetousness. There are, also, in the secret processes of acquiring what does not belong to us, the elements of disloyalty, hypocrisy, and deceit. These social sins lie at the base of social disorder, and make insecure the whole fabric of social life.

The social message of Elisha, like that of his predecessor, was fragmentary and incomplete, but he pointed the way for his great successors, some of whom were soon to appear. The death of Elisha occurred only a few years before the appearance of Amos, who was destined to give large attention to social reforms. The end of the career of Elisha brings to a close the first great epoch in Jewish prophecy, often called the pre-literary period. This event also marks the complete ascendency of the prophet as the statesman and reformer of Israel and Judah. Elisha lived to see the office of prophet restored to influence and power in the nation. The prophets of the future, as we shall see, were destined to arouse the opposition of courts and people, but never again were the prophets of Israel or Judah to be ignored. Their influence, regardless of the unpopularity of their messages, was destined to exert a profound influence on kings, courts, and people.

TOPICS FOR REPORTS AND INVESTIGATION

1. The International Relations of Israel in the Ninth Century.
2. The Wisdom of the National Policy of Elijah.

3. A Comparative Study of the Miracles of Elijah and Elisha.

4. The Political Influence of Elisha.

5. The Historical Interval Between Elisha and Amos.

FURTHER READINGS

Milligan's "Elijah, His Life and Times"; Farrar's "First and Second Book of Kings," Vol. I and II ("Expositor's Bible"); Kent's "The Kings and Prophets of Israel and Judah" ("The Historical Bible"), pp. 17–30; Chamberlin's "The Hebrew Prophets," Chap. IV; Willett's "The Moral Leaders of Israel," pp. 59–84; articles on Elijah and Elisha in encyclopedias and Bible dictionaries.

CHAPTER V

AMOS OF TEKOA

Elisha died about 798 B. C., and almost fifty years intervened before the birth of Amos. This period marked the second important transition in Hebrew history. The first distinct advance toward civilization was made when the Hebrews crossed the Jordan into Canaan. Nomadic life gave way to agriculture. Rural groups of fighting husbandmen gradually developed into a barbaric kingdom. With this accomplished, Israel was ready for the second step, which occurred after the death of Elisha and before the birth of Amos. We are now to see urban life develop and civic culture [1] for the first time emerge. Each advancement towards civilization was marked by difficulties and temptations. As we have seen, the first stage brought the Hebrews into contact with the shrines of Canaanitish gods, and endangered monotheistic faith. We are now to see new dangers confronting Israel. City communities developed commerce and larger intercourse with foreign na-

[1] Davidson says that the stage of civic culture is marked by "a gradual emancipation from institutions or a gradual development of individualism. Institutions do not disappear, but man becomes master of them and rises to direct institutions toward moral freedom." "History of Education," page 76. The author, however, contends that the Hebrews did not attain civic culture until after the exile.

tions. "There were all the temptations of rapid wealth," says G. A. Smith, "all the dangers of an equally increasing poverty. The growth of comfort among the rulers meant the growth of thoughtlessness. Cruelty multiplied with refinement. The upper classes were lifted away from feeling the real woes of the people. There was a well-fed and sanguine patriotism, but at the expense of indifference to social sin and want. Religious zeal and liberality increased, but they were coupled with the proud's misunderstanding of God: an optimist faith without moral insight or sympathy.

"It is all this which makes the prophets of the eighth century so modern, while Elisha's life is still so ancient. With him we are back in the times of our own border wars — of Wallace and Bruce, with their struggles for the freedom of the soil. With Amos, we stand among the conditions of our own day. The *city* has arisen. For the development of the highest form of prophecy, the universal and permanent form, there was needed that marvellously unchanging mould of human life whose needs and sorrows, whose sins and problems, are to-day the same as they were all those thousands of years ago." [2]

AGE OF JEROBOAM II

Amos lived during the latter half of the long reign of Jeroboam II, which began about 783 B. C. and continued until 743 B. C., a period of forty years.[3] He was the fourth king of Israel belonging to the dy-

[2] "Twelve Prophets" ("Expositor's Bible"), Vol. I, p. 34.
[3] II Kings 14: 23, 29.

nasty of Jehu, and the most notable of his line. Jehu, the founder of the dynasty, was a merciless reformer, and practically exterminated the worship of Baal in his kingdom. His son, Jehoahaz, who followed him on the throne, suffered great loss of territory because he was unable to defend it, for most of the nation's warriors had been slain in the wars during his father's reign. A revival came to the nation in the reign of Jehoash, the third king of the dynasty, who ascended the throne in 798 B. C. His ability as a warrior enabled him to recover much of the territory which had been wrested from his father by Syria. Elisha had just died and this recovery of territory was in accord with the prophet's dying promise.[4]

The brilliant reign of Jeroboam II scarcely finds a place in the historic record of Israelitish history. Only eight verses in the biblical record are devoted to this remarkable reign of forty years. But this is supplemented fortunately by the contemporary utterances of the prophet Amos, who gives a rather detailed description of the social conditions of this reign. We are somewhat prepared for Amos' denunciation of him, by the words: "*he departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, wherewith he made Israel to sin*," [5] for his reign was a grievous and ignominious one.[6] But, in spite of the social wrongs with which he inflicted his people, he was successful in restoring the former territorial limits of Israel. He lived to see his power extended from the Dead Sea on the south to Hamath, which is located

[4] II Kings 13: 14-19.
[5] II Kings 14: 24.
[6] I Kings 14: 7-13.

between the Lebanon ranges, to the north. History has often repeated this experience. Brilliant achievements in arms and territorial expansion are accompanied with internal deterioration in morals and social relations.

SKETCH OF AMOS

It was in the midst of this age of external splendor that Amos was born in the village of Tekoa, a few miles southeast of Jerusalem, in the kingdom of Judah, about 759 B. C. We are told that at the time of Amos "Tekoa was a place without sanctity and almost without tradition."[7] The previous mention of the village in history was in connection with its fortification by Rehoboam, and the visit of a wise woman to David, who came from this locality. Nature also had not been very generous to this section. The country round about was bare and desolate. Doubtless most of the people lived scantily upon the limited resources of this locality, for both agriculture and fruit raising must have been greatly restricted by the barren and rocky wastes. Amos, in his conversation with the priest Amaziah, tells us of his mode of living and his dual occupation. "*I was an herdsman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit.*"[8] The original rather implies an inferior grade of sheep, and the fruit was a kind of fig that never came to natural ripeness in the colder, elevated areas of Judah. We would judge from this that Amos lived a rather isolated and precarious life. Doubtless the visits to the various cities of the locality to sell his meager products were the chief fac-

[7] G. A. Smith's "Twelve Prophets," Vol. I, p. 74.
[8] Amos 7: 14.

tor in determining his wonderful career, for it was in this way he came in contact with the luxury and wealth of the cities, which he could not help contrasting with the poverty and hardships of his own people.

We have no way of knowing why he went to Bethel to proclaim his message instead of to the nearer cities of Bethlehem, Hebron, or Jerusalem. However, neither of these cities was at a great distance, and we may assume that he was reasonably familiar with the social conditions of each for the reason, just cited, that he had doubtless visited all of them in seeking a market for his wool and fruit. We are confronted also with the difficulty that he belonged to Judah, and lived under the righteous reign of King Uzziah,[9] which was a period marked by great prosperity and development. It might have been that Amos did not feel that Judah was weak in social responsibility, but if this was not the motive for attempting reform here, instead of in Israel, we have the other historical fact that because of the ancient covenants of Israel there was a feeling of unity between these countries, and the welfare of both was a matter of concern to the reformers of either country.

THE SOCIAL MESSAGE OF AMOS

The austerity of life at Tekoa developed a sensitiveness in the mind of Amos to the life of the people in the country as contrasted with that of the city. Opportunity enabled him to contrast the luxury, frivolities, dishonesty, immorality, and hypocrisy of the cities with the hardships, poverty, and restricted opportunities of the rural population. To lay bare

[9] Amos 1: 1.

this condition and to quicken the consciences of the rich was the mission of this great reformer. The moral program of Amos may be said to comprehend two great classes of social offences: (1) *International crimes against humanity;* (2) *national social wrongs.*

The great message of Amos begins with a catalogue of the offences against humanity that had been committed by the neighboring nations of Israel. A specific sin is charged up to Syria, Philistia, Phoenicia, Edom, Ammon, and Moab; and with a terrible formulary introduction, "*for three transgressions — yea for four,*" he rebukes each in turn for its sin of condemnation. Damascus is rebuked for *cruelty;*[10] Edom is execrated for *violating a fraternal covenant;*[11] the Ammonites are denounced because they *murdered helpless and defenseless women* in their wars of conquest. Finally, condemnation is meted out to the Moabites for the barbarous act of *destroying the body of the king of Edom,* who lost his life in battle. In an age of inhumanity this teacher of universal righteousness sets a twentieth century standard of national and international integrity, and calls the attention of Israel and Judah to the heinous nature of such crimes, and the thorough-going punishment to be meted out to each nation that disregards the responsibiltiy of international justice.

But can Judah and Israel congratulate themselves that they are above reproach? No. The prophet turns in the third chapter, with the use of this same reproachful formula, to rebuke them for social sins

[10] Amos 1: 6. [11] Amos 1: 9.

of serious import. Even Judah, with its righteous king and national prosperity, is charged with the violation of law, and her people are charged with lying and deceit.

Then follows the category of social wrongs which Amos describes with rather great detail, for he was familiar with the internal conditions in his own country:

(1) EXTORTION

"*They have sold the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes.*" [12]

"*Hear this, O ye that would swallow up the needy, and cause the poor of the land to fail, saying, when will the new moon be gone, that we may sell grain? And the Sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and dealing falsely with balances of deceit; that we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes, and sell the refuse of the wheat?*" [13]

Two kinds of extortion are referred to in this indictment. The first relates to the condemnation of the innocent by unscrupulous judges. They have sold the righteous (used in a judicial, not a moral, sense) for money. The judge would deliver to the creditor as a slave the poor man who could not pay even for a pair of shoes, and justify his decree by the Levitical law.[14] The second indictment is of the rich for coveting the small possessions of the poor. Amos takes time to indicate the method used by rich and powerful men of the nation to gain possession of the earnings of the poor. They are so covetous

[12] Amos 2: 6. [13] Amos 8: 4-7. [14] Lev. 25: 39

that they can scarcely wait until the feast days (until the new moon is over) to begin their corrupt bargaining.[15] The method used to defraud was to give small measure ("*ephah*"), and by increasing the price, making the shekel great, and also by the use of false scales or scales used to deceive. Not satisfied with their corrupt methods, they would sell the bad grain, for this was before the days of pure food and pure seed laws. By this method the poor man became poorer, until he would either be compelled to sell himself to the rich man to relieve his debts,[16] or by a decree of the court be turned over to the creditor because of inability to meet his obligations. Thus the court became the willing servants of the wealthy aristocracy.

(2) IMMORALITY

Shameless immorality was a second charge made by Amos, and this was practiced in connection with religious rites. "*A man and his father go unto the same maiden, to profane My holy name, and they lay themselves down beside every altar upon clothes taken in pledge, and in the house of their God they drink wine of such as have been fined.*"[17] G. A. Smith[18] calls this a "riot of sin; the material of

[15] "Chodesh, the new moon, was a holiday on which all trade was suspended, just as it was on the Sabbath." — Kiel and Delitzsch's "Commentary on the Minor Prophets," Vol. I, p. 315.

[16] It was a well-established Hebrew statute that raiment taken in pledge was to be returned each night (Ex. 22: 26), but the usurers and licentious people shamelessly violated this humane law.

[17] Amos 2: 8.

[18] "Twelve Prophets" ("Expositor's Bible"), Vol. 1, p. 137.

their revels is the miseries of the poor, its stage the house of God." This is a horrible and repulsive indictment, but it is one of the by-products of civilization that has manifested itself in every age when populations become congested in thickly-inhabited centers.

(3) CORRUPTION IN CITIES

The corrupt practices that had developed in the cities caused the prophet to warn the people to avoid even the religious centers. "*But seek not Bethel, nor enter into Gilgal, and pass not to Beer-sheba; for Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Bethel shall come to naught.*" [19] This "back to the country" admonition reveals the prophet's belief in the degenerating influences of city life. He had seen idolatrous worship and immorality develop in the most religious centers, and he became convinced that a pure faith and a wholesome moral life were impossible under such conditions.

(4) CLASS INEQUALITY AND OPPRESSION

Amos attributes inequality of opportunity and the practice of oppression to the injustice in court administration. "*For I know your manifold transgressions*, and *your mighty sins; they afflict the just, they take a bribe*, and *they turn aside in the gate from their right.*" [20] This condition made it possible for the rich to "*tread upon the poor, and take the distribution of corn from him.*" [21]

The men were not alone in their oppressions. The women, too, were guilty, and against them Amos

[19] Amos 5: 5. [20] Amos 5: 12. [21] Amos 5: 11.

makes use of the most scornful words. "*Hear this word, ye kine* [cows] *of Bashan, that are in the mountain of Samaria, which oppress the poor, which crush the needy, which say to their masters, Bring, and let us drink.*" [22] The analogy is a rough one, but it expressed a herdsman's conception of the rich and voluptuous women who trampled on the weaker and less fortunate — thoughtless of the rights of others.

CONDEMNATION OF WASTEFUL LUXURY

Amos looked upon all the evidences of conspicuous luxury with disapproval, for he saw in it all the ill-gotten gain of a privileged class. The prophet could not believe that Jehovah would allow this opulent class to enjoy the fruits of their ill-gotten gain. "*And I will smite the winter house with the summer house; and the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall have an end, saith the Lord.*" [23] "*Ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink wine of them.*" [24] Again he pictures, in another connection, the irresponsibility and luxurious ease of this class: "*Ye that put away the evil day and cause the seat of violence to come near; that lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch yourselves upon your couches, and eat the lambs out of the flocks, and the calves out of the midst of the stall; that sing idle songs to the sound of viol and that drink wine in bowls, and anoint with the chief oils.*" [25] The terms used by Amos indicate

[22] Amos 4: 1.
[23] Amos 3: 15.
[24] Amos 5: 11.
[25] Amos 6: 4-6.

that Hebrew civilization comprehended a leisure class that possessed all the attributes of "conspicuous leisure" and "conspicuous consumption" so vividly described by Veblin.[26]

It was but natural that such indictments and prophecies of destruction should create a sensation and arouse violent opposition on the part of the rich and idle class. We naturally expect such a class to have its defenders, men who themselves have profited by the system under condemnation.

PRIEST VS. PROPHET

The protest of Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, is an illustration of this type of zealous defender. "Amos has conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel, the land is not able to bear all his words," was the message of Amaziah to his king, and he doubtless voiced the feeling of all the class against whom Amos was hurling his merciless anathemas. But the protest of Amaziah is interesting from another viewpoint. It illustrates the attitude of the official priests of the day. For more than a century the chasm between priest and prophet had been widening.[27] By the time of Amos the differences had become so great as to constitute a struggle for supremacy between ritualistic formalism and vital religious conviction. These differences resulted in the priestly class becoming the conservatives, and the prophetic class the radicals. The prophets became the protestants and the priests the

[26] "The Theory of the Leisure Class," Chap. III, and IV.

[27] See Baldwin's "Our Modern Debt to Israel," Chap. IV, for a splendid discussion of the office of the priest in Jewish society.

defenders of the established order. It was natural for the priests to constitute a popular and influential class in Jewish society. They pleased the ruling classes by defending the accepted social order, and they directed the routine of public worship and interpreted the law. This identified them with the rulers in a more intimate way than could possibly exist with either the prophets or the sages. The priests had also profited by the extortion and injustice of the age, and they felt called upon to defend the system that meant profit to them. Amos and Amaziah may be said to represent typically the two respective classes here described. Professor Jordan says that "Amos and Amaziah represent two different worlds, worlds that are always in conflict, and that can never understand each other. The courtier, the representative of luxury, fashion, and convenience, stands now face to face with a stern, strong man, who is a type of the simplicity of religion and the supremacy of conscience."[28] The verbal conflict between these two men is one of the most interesting incidents contained in the book of Amos.[29]

GENERAL SOCIAL CONTENT

While it is easy to see that Amos was more concerned with the specific imperfections of the social order, his message contains a general social content of great importance. Social justice and righteousness were inseparable. Both were the product of an ethical *like-mindedness.* "*Shall two walk together, except they have agreed?*"[30] "*Seek good and not*

[28] Prophetic Ideas and Ideals, p. 17. [29] Amos 7: 10-17.
[30] Amos 3: 3.

evil that ye may live." [31] "*Let justice roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.*" [32] In the first of these great statements, we have the genesis of what the sociologists now call like-mindedness. Giddings [33] has called this particular type "*dogmatic like-mindedness,*" or the type that is produced by the strong partisan or social reformer. Amos sought to produce a solidarity of effort for the promotion of goodness. He thought the possibility of this rested upon the establishment of justice ("*mishpat*"), and he thought this was possible only by reforming the courts, which were controlled by the upper classes. The problem is fundamental and of unusually wide application. The age-long social problem has been to prevent some members of society from using others as the means to the accomplishment of selfish ends. Hoffding expresses this thought as follows: "A society of human personalities can be perfect only when none of its members uses others as mere means, and when no portion of the personality of any individual member is unsymmetrically favored or repressed." [34]

The conclusion of Amos as to the content of moral conduct agrees with this statement, and there is every indication that this prophet realized fully the nature of this content. He sought to indicate the value of the details of life that made up the activities of men, which was not a difficult task in his time. It is remarkable that after all these centuries we find

[31] Amos 5: 14. [32] Amos 5: 24.

[33] Professor Giddings classes like-mindedness as follows: (a) instinctive, (b) sympathetic, (c) dogmatic, (d) deliberative. See "Inductive Sociology," Chap. IV, pp. 133–154.

[34] "*Ethik,*" p. 200.

the social categories of Amos still valid. His message is still vital and applicable. We are endangered by the same sins that Amos was compelled to condemn. Warring nations in this good year (1916) have been condemned for crimes similar to those charged up to the neighboring nations of Israel. Domestic wrongs current in the time of Amos are still practiced in our day. Nations, as well as individuals, need to heed the admonitions of Amos to "seek good and not evil." The message of this early Jewish prophet, therefore, is a warning and an admonition to us. We can well afford to heed it.

TOPICS FOR REPORTS AND INVESTIGATION

1. Sketch of the Life of Amos.
2. The Significance of the Visions of Amos in Chapters Seven and Eight.
3. The Prophetic Element in Amos.
4. Historic Sketch of Israel and Judah in the Time of Amos.
5. Religious Ideals of Amos.

FURTHER READINGS

Jordan's "Prophetic Ideas and Ideals," pp. 17–26; Kirkpatrick's "The Doctrine of the Prophets," pp. 83–108; Cornill's "The Prophets of Israel," pp. 37–46; George Adam Smith's "Book of the Twelve Prophets," Vol. 1, pp. 61–196; Kent's "The Kings and Prophets of Israel and Judah" ("The Historical Bible"), pp. 53–79; Baldwin's "Our Modern Debt to Israel," Chap. IV, pp. 95-133; Sanders and Kent's "The Messages of the Earlier Prophets," pp. 23-44; G. Campbell Morgan's "Living Messages of the Books of the Bible" (Genesis to Malachi), pp. 197-211; articles on Amos in encyclopedias and Bible dictionaries.

CHAPTER VI

HOSEA BEN BEERI

Hosea began to prophesy in Israel in less than a decade after the close of the public ministry of Amos. Conditions had not materially changed during this short interval. The two prophets analyzed the social situation in about the same way, but each had his own particular remedy to apply in the reform movement of the times. Social justice is the most emphatic element in the program of Amos. In Hosea, knowledge [1] and the quality of mercy as the attribute of God are predominant. Justice and mercy are the attributes of the God of both prophets, but they do not give equal emphasis to them. These prophets differed widely in inheritance, early environment, and temperament. This produced in Amos the intellectuality that caused him to magnify the ethical element, while the emotional nature of Hosea resulted in an appeal to religious sentiment. The two supplemented each other admirably.

DECLINE AND FALL OF ISRAEL

Hosea lived during troublous times. He has been called the "Jeremiah of Israel," for he was the prophet of the decline and fall of the kingdom of Israel, just as Jeremiah was the prophet of the de-

[1] Hos. 4: 6.

cline and fall of Judah. Bible scholars generally agree that the sermons of Hosea were delivered between 750 B. C. and the capture of Samaria in 722 B. C. This would bring a part of his message [2] into the period covered by the closing days of Jeroboam II. Evidently the social offenses which Amos condemned so strongly had begun to undermine the life of Israel, and the calamities and penalties which he prophesied had begun to come upon the nation. The victory of Zechariah, the son of Jeroboam, on the classic battle field of Jezreel, brought to a close the reign of the house of Jehu.

The twenty years that followed the death of this great king were years of rapid moral decay and political confusion. Zechariah, the son of King Jereboam, followed him on the throne, but he was assassinated by Shellum ben Jabesh after a reign of about six months. He in turn was slain in about a month by Menehem ben Gadi. Menehem held the throne for six or seven years, but in order to do so he was compelled to impoverish his people by collecting from them large sums with which he paid tribute to the Assyrian king. The words contained in the second part [3] of Hosea were doubtless spoken during this period. Political decay had inevitably followed the moral decay described by both Amos and Hosea. The latter summed up the political condition in two striking, epigrammatic sentences. "*Ephraim, he mixeth himself among the people.*" "*Ephraim is a cake not turned.*" [4]

The first of these sentences describes the failure of Israel's foreign policy; the second was designed as

[2] Hos. Chapters 1–3. [3] Hos. 4: 14. [4] Hos. 7: 8.

a satire on the social conditions at home. Why was Israel called upon in these evil days to pay tribute? Because the nation had failed to use the strength that came to her by virtue of having the true God to worship, and had followed after the gods of other nations. In so doing national strength was sacrificed, and the opportunity for international supremacy was lost. Instead of drawing the other nations up to the standard required by the supreme God, Israel sank to the level of worshiping false gods. In this way Ephraim *mixed himself* with other nations.

The figure of the unturned cake may mean one of several things, according to George Adams Smith.[5] (1) It may refer to social inequality of the people — one-half of whom were too poor, the other half too rich. (2) It may mean dissemination of religion — they retained it for their temples, but neglected it in their daily living. (3) It may allude to Israel's politics, in which hasty policies were undertaken which resulted disastrously in the end. Or (4) the prophet may have had in mind the imperfect culture of Israel in which there were superficiality and exaggeration. It is not improbable that he had in mind all of these conditions. In other figures in this chapter the history of the period is satirized. In each there is an illusion to the fatal decline of the nation and the cause of its final doom.

LIFE OF HOSEA

Very little is known about the early life of Hosea. We are told that he was the son of Beeri.[6] There is

[5] "Twelve Prophets" ("Expositor's Bible"), Vol. I, p. 273.
[6] Hos. 1: 1.

some evidence in his utterances that would lead to the conclusion that he was a native of the northern kingdom, for he speaks of "our king," referring to the king of Israel.[7] Hosea was a younger man than Amos, and we cannot be certain that he ever heard this great preacher of righteousness on the streets of Bethel or Samaria, but it is not improbable that he at least knew intimately of the great work of his predecessor. Professor Willet[8] suggests that this prophet was possibly a man not only of culture, but of opulence, and that he may have been a member of the priestly class. This conclusion is hardly supported by any specific utterance of the prophet, but we are justified in the conclusion that he was the prophet of love, and that his patriotism was guided by a remarkable insight into the political and moral conditions of his country.

The one great fact of certainty in his life is that of his unhappy and disastrous marriage. The first division of the book[9] narrates this sad experience, and illustrates one social ideal of Hosea, his conception of the sanctity of the marriage relation. We are told that he was married to a young woman by the name of Gomer, the daughter of a certain Diblaim. He probably procured his wife by purchase, which was in conformity to established custom. Perhaps this marriage in the beginning held out all the promise that the young husband could have desired. It is not improbable that the young wife possessed many of the attributes that a high-minded

[7] Hos. 7: 5.
[8] "The Moral Leaders of Israel," Part II, p. 26.
[9] Hos. Chapters 1–3.

young man would expect to find in the woman of his choice. But Hosea had not yet measured the seductive charm and the licentious practices that had gained headway in the religious ceremonies of the day, and he little dreamed how these rites were to fascinate his wife, and cause her to neglect her home and forget the obligations of her domestic ties. In the great religious centers of Bethel, Gilgal, and Dan, and in the high places, religious ceremonies continued during the decline, but the form of worship had degenerated. The feasts which were held under religious sanction were little better than orgies. These practices reacted on the whole moral fiber of the national life. The tragedy in the home of Hosea may be traced to these immoral conditions.

Time went on, and three children, two sons and one daughter, were born into the home of this couple. By direction of the Lord the first boy was called *Jezreel.* It seems natural that this happy and contented family should give this child the name of the peaceful valley that extended in the distance from their home. It could not have been foreseen then that a new meaning would be given this name in a few years when the bloody battle of Jezreel was to be fought there as the result of which the strength of the northern kingdom would be broken. But this prophet soon realized that other affections and interests were striving against those of his home, and that the wife was fast yielding to these temptations. So, when the second child, a daughter, was born, the husband had become fully aware of his wife's neglect of her domestic duties. He therefore named the girl "*Lo-ruhamah*," "*the uncared-for.*"

By the time the third child was born into this household, Hosea had become fully aware that his wife was unfaithful and that he no longer possessed her affections, so this child was given the sinister name of "*Lo-ammi*," "*no-kin-of-mine*." Six years had probably intervened between the marriage of Hosea and the birth of this third child. The crisis had come. The wife abandoned her home. Her descent to degradation and infamy was rapid. Hosea may have watched it with great sorrow, for he was doubtless aware of her life and conduct even after she had left her home. Her complete humiliation finally came — she was to be sold in the slave market. While she had sacrificed all right to his protection, still this man could not forget that she was his wife, and he went into the slave market and bought back this woman for fifteen pieces of silver and a homer and a half of barley. In defiance of established custom and public opinion, he restored her to his home and placed her under his loving protection.

The significance of this narrative is two-fold: In the first place, the infidelity of his wife caused him to see the analogy between his own condition and that of the infidelity of Israel toward God. He began to understand the command of Jehovah, "*Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredom and children of whoredom, for the land doth commit great whoredom, departing from Jehovah.*"[10] He began to realize that Israel is the unfaithful wife, Jehovah the devoted husband. It gradually dawned upon him that his people had been untrue to God, and that it was his mission to declare unto them the love

[10] Hos. 1: 2.

of God, and to plead with them not to desert the true God and go out after false gods. In the second place, we have presented the terrible consequences resulting from the dissolution of the family. We see that social integrity depends on the permanence of the home. In an age of moral decline, ideals of the marriage relation as held and exemplified by Hosea were in marked contrast to the common conceptions of the age. He did not lay down any rules governing the relations of members one toward another, but he described the experience of a husband and father with right ideals, which he strongly contrasted with the conduct of a wife and mother with wrong ideals. His preëminent social message to his and all future ages is that marriage vows involve eternal obligations, and to regard them lightly means to undermine human society.

HOSEA'S SOCIAL MESSAGE

The social message in part one of Hosea has been sufficiently indicated in the preceding paragraph. In the second division of his book (chapters four to fourteen) we find a category of social wrongs on the part of the people that indicates the deepest moral depravity and the greatest disregard of the principles of social justice. The order of treatment leads us to believe that the decay in family integrity, of which his own domestic tragedy was an example, may have been regarded as the source of most of the social derelictions that came upon the people of Israel. The array is an imposing one. Chapter seven is literally a summary of a nation's social defeats, and in itself supplies a study in social pathol-

ogy. But this chapter alone does not comprehend all the social diseases with which Israel was afflicted.

George Adams Smith [11] thus describes the social conditions of Israel at this time: "It is not only, as in Amos, the sins of the luxurious, of them that are at ease in Zion, which were exposed; also literal bloodshed; highway robbery with murder, abetted by the priests; [12] 'the thief breaketh in and the robber-troop maketh a raid.'" [13] Sanders and Kent [14] thus describe these conditions: "Go into any of their cities,— as, for example, Gilead,— and you may see the bloody footprints of the murderer; assassins lie in wait for their victims; and, greater horror still, on the road to Shechem a band of priests are carrying on organized highway robbery. A gross licentiousness also is corrupting all the people of Israel. . . . Note also the wickedness and the treachery which is openly countenanced in the court. A consuming passion inflames all. You are, alas, familiar with the sickening picture of the king, shamelessly holding court attended by drunken, unscrupulous cut-throats, waiting only for a favorable opportunity to murder their royal master, who himself has mounted the throne by the use of the assassin's knife."

The prophet was not without hope for the people of Israel, although he denounced their evil ways in the most scathing terms. He still felt the effective power of religion. Hosea did not complain that the people were without religion, but that their religion

[11] "Twelve Prophets" ("Expositor's Bible"), Vol. I, p. 216.
[12] Hos. 6: 8-9.
[13] Hos. 7: 1.
[14] "The Message of the Earlier Prophets," p. 62.

was ineffective, because insincere and formal. They could not get the lesson, "*I will have mercy and not sacrifice.*" [15] Sanctuaries and sacrifices have no meaning except as they symbolize the love and sacfice of God, and impel men thereby to live nobler lives. "Mercy," to the prophet, "may be said to concern religion, morality, or philanthropy. It has to do with all because in his view these are only different aspects of the same life. He met a religion that was divorced from morality and philanthropy and he refused to acknowledge that this was a religion in any sense." The prophets never conceived that religion and morality could be separated, and Hosea was no exception to the rule.

But this prophet could not harmonize piety and patriotism in the national life of Israel. Religion could not withstand the onslaughts of worldly prosperity. The ideals of domestic life had given place to infidelity. Untruthfulness, stealing, debauchery, drunkenness, and robbery had overcome the basic virtues on which religion depended. The results were inevitable. In 722 B. C. Samaria paid the penalty for unwise policies and immoral practices. We are told [16] that the king of Assyria besieged Samaria for three years, and that at the end of that time, in the ninth (or last) year of the reign of Hoshea, the city fell and Israel was "carried away."

The social teaching of Hosea concerning Israel in these closing days is supplemented by a kind of appendix which follows the historical record in Kings.[17] Their disobedience is described, their willingness to go off after false gods, and the erection of high

[15] Hos. 6: 6. [16] II Kings 17: 5-6. [17] II Kings 17: 7-23

places, as well as the worship of idols, and the author does not fail to tell of the efforts of the prophets to call them back to the worship of the true God, and to admonish them to forsake their evil ways.

TOPICS FOR REPORTS AND INVESTIGATION

1. A Character Study of Hosea.
2. A Contrast of Amos and Hosea.
3. The History of Assyria in the Eighth Century before Christ.
4. The Literary Features of the Book of Hosea.
5. A Study of the Use of the term "Ephraim" in the Book of Hosea.

FURTHER READINGS

Willett's "The Prophets of Israel," Chap. VI, p. 53; Petrie's "Israel's Prophets," Chap. IV, p. 53; Cornill's "The Prophets of Israel," pp. 44–55; Kirkpatrick's "The Decline of the Prophets," Lecture V, pp. 109–162; Chamberlain's "The Hebrew Prophets," Chap. VIII, pp. 89–100; Copass' "The Message of Hosea"; Sanders and Kent's "The Messages of the Earlier Prophets," pp. 47-76; G. Campbell Morgan's "Living Messages of the Books of the Bible" (Genesis to Malachi), pp. 165-179; Mitchell's "Ethics of the Old Testament," Chap. X, pp. 125–132; G. A. Smith's "Twelve Prophets" ("Expositor's Bible,") Vol. I; articles on Hosea in Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias.

CHAPTER VII

ISAIAH OF JERUSALEM

The center of prophetic influence is now to change from the capital of the northern to that of the southern kingdom. All previous prophetic leaders had belonged to the nation as a whole or to Israel alone. Hosea was peculiarly the prophet of Israel. Unlike Amos, he seems to have had no message for other countries contiguous to his own. The problems of his people absorbed his entire thought. But with the fall of Samaria, the prophetic influence of the north came to a close, and our study will now be shifted to Jerusalem as a center, and to Isaiah as the mighty voice proclaiming righteousness and hope.

The activities of Isaiah extended over a period of about forty years (740–701). We are reminded again that Samaria fell in 722 B. C. Isaiah, therefore, was a contemporary of Hosea, and doubtless knew much of the moral and social conditions of the northern kingdom in the sad days just preceding the fall of Samaria, but most of the important work of this great prophet came after the capture of Samaria and the fall of the northern kingdom.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Isaiah lived during the reigns of Uzziah (or Azariah), Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. The character

of Uzziah's reign is recorded in Kings [1] and more fully in Chronicles.[2] He seems to have been an aggressive king, for he extended the possessions of the kingdom, erected public buildings, increased the fortifications of Jerusalem, and constructed towers both in the capital and elsewhere in his kingdom. He also greatly strengthened the standing army of the country. Stock raising and farming received attention at his hands. The contraction of leprosy brought his active reign to a close, and gradually his son, Jotham, acquired the reins of government. Uzziah died in 739 B. C., and his son became the sovereign in his own right.

Jotham reigned sixteen years,[3] and his reign was an attempt to carry out the policies of his father. We are told in the brief record of his reign in Kings that he did permit the local sanctuaries to continue, but these had also been permitted to continue in the reign of his father.

Jotham was followed on the throne by his son Ahaz, who was quite a different type of ruler. He reversed the order of things. He desecrated the house of the Lord, revived the rites of Baal-worship, restored the high places to their former importance, and even introduced the horrible heathen Phœnician custom of human sacrifice. The brief record [4] of these practices reveals an administration completely devoid of the conscious responsibility and public trust imposed by this king's forefathers. The first of the Assyrian invasions of Judah by Tiglath-pileser II occurred in 734–732 B. C. while Ahaz sat on the

[1] I Kings 15: 1-7.
[2] II Chron. 26.
[3] II Kings 15: 34.
[4] II Kings 16: 1-4.

throne. We cannot be certain of the date of this king's death, but it was probably not far from 716 B. C. Happily Hezekiah again reversed the order of things, and, while not a strong or great leader, he did administer his kingdom with a view to the restoration of the religion of Jehovah. The weakness of Hezekiah's reign will be discussed in connection with the political policies and reforms of Isaiah. It is sufficient to state here that Sennacherib, king of Assyria, overran Judah in 701; and, according to this Assyrian king, forty-six of Hezekiah's cities were taken, 200,150 of his people were carried into captivity, and the entire country ravaged and laid waste. Isaiah also gives a vivid description of the siege of Jerusalem during this invasion in chapters thirty-six and thirty-seven.

Judah had suffered the fate of her kinsman of the north. The reasons were also similar. Each had been untrue to the worship of Jehovah, immorality had absorbed the vitality of the nation, and their kings had been devoted to their own selfish pleasures rather than to patriotic public service.

SKETCH OF ISAIAH

As with most of the prophets, little is known of the personal life of Isaiah. He was the son of a certain Amoz,[5] and a native of Jerusalem. Tradition represents him as a member of a royal family, but doubtless this is due to the otherwise unexplainable fact that he was influential with the rulers and political leaders of his country, which would have been

[5] Isa. 1: 1.

regarded as unusual under any other condition.

His active service as a prophet and servant of God began in 739 B. C.— the year of the death of King Uzziah. For the next forty years he was destined to be a commanding figure in the history of Judah. His greatest service was rendered in the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah. During the reign of the former he chided him for arrogant self-confidence and condemned him for infidelity to public trust; the latter he advised concerning unwise policies, and encouraged when in despair. In the language of Kirkpatrick[6] "He was the fearless censor of the faithless and cowardly Ahaz, the trusted counselor of the well-intentioned though vacillating Hezekiah."

Isaiah was married, and we know of at least two of his children because of the significance of their names. In fact, there is importance attached to the name of Isaiah also. His name means "*Jehovah's deliverance*," and is important in the light of his mission and the task of the man. "*Shear-yashub*" is the name of one child,[7] and means "A remnant shall return," which is characteristic of the hope of Isaiah for his people. We are told that he named a son "*Maher-shalal-hash-baz*," which means "Hasten-booty-speed-spoil," which was a reminder of the speedy downfall of Samaria and Damascus.[8] We are also told that his wife was a prophetess,[9] but of her prophetic work we know nothing.

We have no authentic record of the manner or date of Isaiah's death. He probably survived the conquest of Sennacherib and his forces over Judah,

[6] "The Doctrine of the Prophets," p. 146.
[7] Isa. 7: 3. [8] Isa. 8: 1-4. [9] Isa. 8: 3.

but as to just how long, we have no information. There is a Jewish tradition that he lived until the reign of Manasseh (686–641), and that he was put to death in a very cruel manner by this king.

THE SOCIAL MESSAGE OF ISAIAH

It is thought best in this discussion to cull the social message of Isaiah from the first thirty-nine chapters of his book, leaving the other twenty-seven chapters for a second and later study of the subject, as it is generally conceded by biblical scholars that Isaiah of Jerusalem could not have written these latter chapters. In fact, about twelve of the chapters included in the first thirty-nine are usually not attributed to Isaiah, because they are thought to presume historic incidents which are later than Isaiah's time. These conclusions, however, are rather assumed in this discussion than defended, as it is not the purpose of this study to enter into a discussion of controversial points which have little bearing on the social message to be analyzed.

Neither is it necessary specifically to discuss the social message of Isaiah by epochs. It may be safely concluded that the social problems which attracted his attention were vital matters during his entire time. However, the three great problems that especially impressed him were called to public attention in the early part of his public ministry in the reign of Jotham, and recorded in his prophecies.[10] These questions relate (1) *to the distribution and proper use of land;*[11] (2) *the liquor question;*[12] and (3) *the question relating to the "conspicuous consump-*

[10] Isa. 2: 5. [11] Isa. 5: 8. [12] Isa. 5: 11.

tion" of women.[13] But these social conditions were not peculiar to Jotham's reign. They were doubtless matters of serious social concern during the entire period covered by the life of the great prophet. For instance, the contemptuous severity with which he pictures the thoughtless and idle women as recorded in chapter thirty-two, verses nine to twelve, came at a much later date than the denunciation referred to in chapter five, but evidently this was a perpetual social problem that gave this reformer great concern throughout his public ministry.

George Adam Smith[14] thus describes and comments on the two leading sins against which Isaiah proclaimed: "It is with remarkable persistence that in every civilization the two main passions of the human heart, love of wealth and love of pleasure, the instinct to gather and the instinct to squander, have sought precisely these two forms denounced by Isaiah in which to work their social havoc — appropriation of the soil and indulgence in strong drink. Every civilized community develops sooner or later its land-question and its liquor-question." With equal persistence do we find in every country a tendency on the part of women to yield to the vanity of dress and to covet idle ease and needless extravagance. Isaiah's indictments of all three of these social sins are matters of interest, importance, and universal application.

He brings home to the women the folly of their extravagance by giving an inventory of the jewelry

[13] Isa. 3: 11.

[14] "Isaiah" ("Expositor's Bible"), Vol. I, p. 41.

and the costumes worn in fashionable circles: "*Tinkling ornaments about their feet, and their cauls, and their round tires like the moon, the chains and the bracelets, and the mufflers, the bonnets, and the ornaments of the legs, and the headbands, and the earrings, the rings, and nose jewels, the changeable suits of apparel, and the mantles, and the wimples, and the crisping pins, the glasses, and the fine linen, and the hoods and the veils.*" [15] He also describes with severe language the conduct of these women upon the streets of the capitol: "*The daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched-forth-necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet.*" [16] In another place, he pleads with these society women to hear his voice and predicts that "*many days and years shall ye be troubled, ye careless women, for the vintage shall fail, the gathering shall not come.*"

Isaiah seems to have attributed two besetting sins to the women of his day. Luxury had developed a spirit of barbaric display and immodest egotism. Idleness had produced an indifference to the rights of others. The sense of social responsibility was lost. Arrogance was coupled with greed. Sympathy for suffering humanity had disappeared. In such a soil, pride of conquest at any cost, personal revenge for neglect, dissimulation in love, and historical sentimentality find all the constituents for rapid growth. This condition had attracted the attention of Amos in his day, and caused him to apply one of his most cutting phrases in describing these women as the kine of Bashan — a drove of cows,

[15] Isa. 3: 18ff. [16] Isa. 3: 16.

stupid, heedless of things under their feet and thoughtless of the morrow. Isaiah, with the same discrimination, but in greater detail, describes the women of Judah, and warns them of the consequences of their conduct.

Isaiah's second great indictment was against the privileged class that had acquired possession of vast estates by dispossessing the poor yeomen of their ancestral possessions. Against such injustice the prophet pronounces woe: "*Woe unto them that join house to house, that annex field to field, and ye are left to dwell alone in the midst of the land.*" [17] Isaiah does not pause to explain the method by which this was accomplished. He is more concerned with the effects. We know, however, from Amos and Micah, that it was accomplished by unjust evictions and disinheritances. History has repeated this social injustice many times. Two such cases will illustrate. In the Roman struggle between the patricians and plebeians, there was finally passed, over the strongest protest of the patricians, an agrarian law, drawn by Spurius Cassius, which compelled a just distribution of the public lands and prevented the noble class from dispossessing the plebeians. The earlier licinian laws (367 B. C) and the later agrarian laws of Tiberius Gracchus (133 B. C.) had a similar purpose. Turning from Rome to England, we find that this has been an important problem from very early times. We are told by Green that "riots against enclosures, of which we first hear in the time of Henry the Sixth and which became a constant feature of the Tudor period, are indications not only

[17] Isa. 5: 8.

of perpetual strife going on in every quarter between the land owners and the smaller peasant class, but of a mass of social discontent which was to seek constant outlets in violence and revolution."

With a vision infinitely clearer than that possessed by modern social and political reformers, Isaiah saw the results of such a land policy. To him there could be but one result — *depopulation and diminished production.* "*Many houses shall be desolate, even great and fair, without inhabitant. Yea, ten acres of vineyard shall yield one bath, and the seed of an homer shall yield an ephah.*" [18]

Isaiah turns from the social sin of land dispossession to that of intemperance, and the heaviest woe of all is pronounced upon "*those that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine* [19] *inflame them.*" [20] "*Therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust.*" [21] Language could hardly be stronger than this. The comment of George Adams Smith [22] on this passage is worthy of recall:

"The crusade against drink is not the novel thing that many imagine who observe only its late revival among ourselves. In ancient times there was scarcely a state in which prohibitive legislation of the most stringent kind was not attempted, and generally car-

[18] Isa. 5: 9, 10.

[19] The Hebrew word here translated wine is *yayin.* That it was an intoxicant is proved by its use in such passages as Gen. 9: 20-21; 19: 32-33, and I Sam. 1: 14. The word recurs about 150 times in the Old Testament.

[20] Isa. 5: 11 ff.

[21] Isa. 5: 24.

[22] Isa. i-xxxix, p. 45.

ried out with a thoroughness more possible under despots than where, as with us, the slow consent of public opinion is necessary. A horror of strong drink has in every age possessed those who, from their position as magistrates or prophets, have been able to follow for any distance the drift of social life. Isaiah exposes as powerfully as ever any of them did in what the peculiar fatality of drinking lies."

TOPICS FOR REPORTS AND INVESTIGATION

1. The Relations of Israel and Judah during the Last Half of the Eighth Century.
2. A Study of the Reign of Uzziah.
3. The Call of Isaiah to his Prophetic Work.
4. The Social Effects of Assyrian Invasion on Judah.
5. A Study of the Authorship of the Book of Isaiah.

FURTHER READINGS

G. A. Smith's "Isaiah" I-XXXIX ("Expositor's Bible"); Willett's "The Prophets of Israel," Chap. VII; Kirkpatrick's "The Doctrine of the Prophets," Chapter VI, pp. 142-204; Sanders and Kent's "The Messages of the Earlier Prophets," pp. 79–105; Cornill's "The Prophets of Israel," pp. 56–70; Kent's "The Kings and Prophets of Israel and Judah" ("The Historical Bible"), pp. 131–160; Chamberlain's "The Hebrew Prophets," Chap. IX, pp. 103-127; Buttenwieser's "The Prophets of Israel," Chap. V, pp. 254–287; Petrie's "Israel's Prophets," Chap. VI, pp. 98–113; articles on Isaiah in Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias.

CHAPTER VIII

THE POLITICAL REFORMS AND POLICIES OF ISAIAH

It is difficult to draw accurately the line between the intra-social problems of society, and the political policies that primarily concern the welfare of the state. In fact, the social problems in every society are constantly demanding political consideration and governmental action. In the early stages of social reform, we invariably find that moral reformers are uniformly condemned by the political obstructionist on the ground that moral questions should not be the subject of political action. This has been a stock argument on the part of those who have opposed all regulative and prohibitive measures concerning the sale of intoxicating liquors. It has been contended that this is a social and moral question that lies outside the pale of legal regulation and political consideration. In the evolution of moral ideals every social question has been opposed by some on this ground.

As difficult as the line of demarcation is to draw, it is well to give emphasis to the political policies of Isaiah, for his statesmanship is as evident as his moral teaching, and the two cannot be separated except for emphasis. He has been called " the greatest political power in Israel since David." It is certainly true

that no other prophet of Israel ever influenced national affairs to the extent that Isaiah did. In fact, Isaiah is the first of the writing prophets to wield large influence on governmental policies.

POLITICAL VISION REVEALED BY PARABLE

We see the political promise of Isaiah revealed in his parable of the vineyard.[1] He describes with great beauty a vineyard that had been developed with the greatest care and culture by the vinedresser, but after all this care, to the surprise and pain of the caretaker, it "brought forth wild grapes." By easy but sure steps, the prophet leads to the teaching of the parable which he explains: "For the vineyard of Jehovah of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plants; and he looked for justice, but behold oppression, for righteousness, but behold a cry." [2]

The vision of Isaiah in this parable lies at the basis of his political ideals. Citizenship involves the profoundest responsibilities, which are determined by the right relation to God, and we cannot expect the best fruit of civilization to come to any nation of people unless they strive for the best things under the consciousness that God expects the best from his people. The parable has an eternal message for every nation that seeks justice, righteousness, and national prosperity.

PRACTICAL STATESMANSHIP OF ISAIAH

(1) IN THE REIGN OF AHAZ

The political theory of Isaiah as announced in the

[1] Isa. 5: 1-7. [2] Isa. 5: 7.

parable of the vineyard was soon to give way to its application in the practical affairs of the nation. The political wisdom of Isaiah begins to be revealed in chapter seven. The historic facts which made political action necessary are summarized in the first verse: "And it came to pass in the days of Ahaz, the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that Rezin the king of Syria, and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up toward Jerusalem to war against it, but could not prevail against it." But before the siege of Jerusalem had actually begun, and while Ahaz was inspecting the water supply of the city, Isaiah gave Ahaz assurance that the siege would fail. The prophet's words are full of assurance: "Take heed, be quiet, fear not, neither be faint-hearted for the two tails of these firebrands." This assurance was doubtless given because Isaiah realized the fatal policy that was already taking form in the mind of the king — that is, an alliance with Tiglath-pileser, then king of Assyria. But even this did not satisfy Ahaz, and the prophet took another step in an effort to dissuade him. He was told by the prophet that Jehovah was revealing the results of the siege in advance. But all efforts failed, and Ahaz entered upon the policy of appealing to Assyria.[3]

[3] Cornill does not quite share this opinion as to the lack of wisdom of Ahaz. "One may think of Ahaz as one likes. But political foresight he certainly possessed, as the issue proved. By his remaining loyal and unwavering in his unsought submission to Assyria, he brought it about that whilst one after another of the neighboring kingdoms sank, whilst war and uproar, murder and plunder raged about him, Judah remained quiet, a peaceful island on a storm-tossed sea." — "The Prophets of Israel," p. 64.

Isaiah was not ready to give up, however; neither did he cease his efforts to prevent the alliance with Assyria. He immediately appealed from the king directly to the people. Chapter eight contains political addresses which were delivered about the same time as those addressed to the king in chapter seven. We hear this statesman of God saying to his people: "Take counsel together, and it shall come to naught; speak the word, and it shall not stand; for God is with us." [4] He realized that sovereign power after all resided in the people, and they could annul an unwise policy, even of a ruling king. But his appeal to the people was also in vain. The foreign policy of the king was shared in by the people, for they could see only the immediate danger; the ultimate peril was too remote for the Jewish nation to realize at this time. In the light of subsequent history we can realize the far-sighted statesmanship of Isaiah.

The scholarly words of George Adams Smith [5] on the real meaning of chapters seven and eight are suggestive: "As the king for his unworthiness has to give place to the Messiah, so the nation for theirs have to give place to the church. In the seventh chapter the king was found wanting, and the Messiah promised. In the eighth chapter the people are found wanting, and the prophet, turning from them, proceeds to form the church among those who accept the word which king and people have refused."

(2) IN THE REIGN OF HEZEKIAH

The most brilliant period in the ministry of Isaiah came in the reign of Hezekiah. In a religious way

[4] Isa. 8: 10.

[5] Isa. i-xxxix, p. 126.

the king made important reforms. He repaired the house of the lord [6] and required the priests to sanctify themselves,[7] and ordered them to cleanse the house of God.[8] He then invited all the people throughout all his kingdom to come up to Jerusalem for the purpose of observing the Passover. We are not advised as to the part played by Isaiah in these religious activities, but we can reasonably infer that he took a prominent part, for the personal qualities of Hezekiah would not justify the conclusion that he was the sole leader in such far-reaching reforms.

But when we turn from religious matters to those of a political character, we more clearly see the influence exerted and the policies advocated by Isaiah. During the earlier part of the reign of Hezekiah several important historic events had occurred which have a direct bearing upon the political history of Judah. Shalmaneser IV (B. C. 727) had succeeded Tiglath-pileser on the Assyrian throne, and he in turn was now succeeded by Sargon, who had, after three years of siege, captured Samaria in 722 B. C. On the south great changes had also taken place. Egypt had been conquered by Shebek I, called Sabaco by the Greeks. He established his capital at Memphis, and immediately began to make an attempt to unite all the kingdoms on or about the eastern Mediterranean against Assyria.

While these events were occurring, there was gradually growing up in Jerusalem a strong sentiment in favor of an alliance with Egypt. Just as Isaiah had opposed the alliance with Assyria, he now,

[6] II Chron. 29:3.
[7] II Chron. 29:5.
[8] II Chron. 29:15.

with equal fervor, opposed the alliance with Egypt, and, perhaps, for similar reasons. He regarded such an alliance as bad politics, and he traced all bad politics to bad religion. All the prophet's discourses recorded in chapters twenty-eight to thirty-one deal with this one issue. Woe is pronounced upon those "that set out to go down into Egypt, and have not asked at my mouth; to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to take refuge in the shadow of Egypt." [9] So sincere is Isaiah in the conviction that the policy is unsound that he prophesies, "Therefore shall the strength of Pharaoh be your shame, and the trust in the shadow of Egypt your confusion." [10]

Isaiah seems to have been more successful in this contest than he had been when opposing the alliance with Assyria. Judah did not prove disloyal to her agreement with Assyria. The wisdom of following the prophet's counsel was soon to be realized. Sargon inflicted a terrible defeat upon Sabaco in 720 B. C. in the battle of Raphia, and nine years later Sargon again appeared in Palestine to put down a rebellion of some of the other states that had been induced to form an alliance with Egypt, but, due to the wise statesmanship of Isaiah, the Jewish people were left unmolested until after the death of Sargon, when Hezekiah attempted to throw off the Assyrian yoke. Isaiah continued to be the adviser of the king of Judah during the rebellion against Sennacherib, and his most useful public service came during this sad period. But no new political policy grew out of the changing order of things. Isaiah's chief task con-

[9] Isa. 30: 2. [10] Isa. 30: 3.

sisted in encouraging the king, and giving him the full benefit of his ripe experience and wisdom.

POLITICAL ATTITUDE TOWARD COMMERCE

Isaiah had resisted a political alliance with either Assyria or Egypt. He had felt that no compromise should be made with any nation that worshiped false gods, and that it was the eternal work of Judah to seek to keep the religion of Jehovah pure. He now turns to the consideration of an entirely different kind of an alliance, an alliance for commercial gain and mercenary advantage. In chapter twenty-two, which was proclaimed about 702 B. C., we have, in Isaiah's chapter on Tyre, one of the prophet's ripest and most profound discussions of a question which has now grown to be the foremost question of the world — that is, the regulation and control of the commercial spirit.

The task of Isaiah was to take hold of all the forces of the world and to direct them in such a way as to make them contribute to the religion of God. Chapter twenty-three, therefore, does not represent Isaiah's repudiation of the commercial spirit of Tyre, but rather a warning concerning the danger of the mercenary spirit which too often accompanies it. So we have the old prophet commending the enterprise and commercial prestige of Tyre in these enthusiastic words, "And on great waters the seed of the Shihor, the harvest of the river, was her revenue; and she is the mart of nations." [11]

We would expect to hear these commendatory words of the Jews in later historic periods, for they

[11] Isa. 33: 3.

were destined to become the greatest and most ingenious traders and merchants of the world, but at this time commerce was a new thing to the Jewish people, and it is a significant fact in history that commerce had grown vast enough in any country to attract attention and to impress the imagination of a Jewish prophet as early as the age of Isaiah. It is perhaps more remarkable that any man at that period could see the dangers of an unrestricted commercial spirit. Could there be danger in it for the Jewish people? They were an inland people and at that time commerce was impossible except for maritime nations. Isaiah probably felt that the supremacy given to Tyre through commerce might finally cause this nation to seek a political alliance with Judah in her efforts to gain larger control of the commerce over Assyria and other neighboring countries. Therefore, he saw fit to commend the good things that this city had done, but he was determined that Judah was not to fail to observe the dangers.

The commercial spirit has the fundamental weakness that it often has no higher aim than that of financial profit. It is constantly in danger of making men the means rather than the end; it loses sight of the relative importance of things. The spirit, therefore, that makes all things subservient to the one end, which may be summed up as the desire for profit, was condemned by Isaiah, and to this spirit he gave a very ugly name,— the spirit of the harlot. The man or the nation that is absorbed by this spirit, is doomed to destruction. As much as the prophet admired thrift, he felt compelled to reveal the fate of Tyre, for she had fallen into this venal spirit.

She is doomed to pay the penalty for transgression. "Tyre shall be forgotten seventy years," the prophet predicts, and then, carrying out the figure of the harlot, "after the end of seventy years it shall be unto Tyre as in the song of the harlot. Take a harp, go about the city, thou harlot that hast been forgotten; make sweet melody, sing many songs, that thou mayest be remembered." [12]

THE BASIS OF ISAIAH'S POLITICAL MOTIVES

The consummation of the public ministry of Isaiah was, however, at hand. The revelation of the guiding principle of his public life was to be made known to the people. He had always held that Assyria was a rod in the hand of God to chastise the Jewish people when they wandered away from God.[13] He often declared that the enemies of Judah would be destroyed when they were no longer needed as an instrument in God's hands to effect a complete social and moral reformation among the people of God.[14] We can now see why he was so bitterly opposed to Judah's forming foreign alliances. Judah needed to resist any political influence that would make it easy for her to yield to lower religious, social, or moral standards, and this would be the danger that would result from political affiliation. The people, in their blindness, could not see all this, but a demonstration which was more than convincing was to come near the close of the old prophet's life.

Jerusalem had been invested by Sennacherib, and to escape a siege Hezekiah had paid the Assyrian king a large tribute, and had withdrawn to Lachish,

[12] Isa. 23: 15-16. [13] Isa. 10: 5. [14] Isa. 14: 24-27; 17: 12-14.

a short distance southwest of Jerusalem. But in the meantime Sennacherib heard a rumor that Judah had formed a secret alliance with Egypt, and he immediately decided to take no chances, but to force the surrender of the city of Jerusalem. He at once moved his army up, and began the siege of the city. The Assyrian king had violated every pledge, but Hezekiah was powerless to resist, and submission seemed inevitable. In his desperation, the Jewish king appealed to Isaiah. The crowning prophecy of this part of his ministry was then spoken, and his social and political teaching was soon to be realized. "I will send a blast upon him [Sennacherib], and he shall hear a rumor, and return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own hand." [15] Hezekiah was astounded by these words. He could not see how this could be true, as he was defenseless and the Assyrian hosts were large and fierce. But the king's faith in God was renewed as he thought of the loyalty of the old prophet who had been true to the best interests of his people, so he went up into the house of the Lord, and prayed that Judah might be delivered in order that she might fulfill her real mission, which she had too often been prone to forget.[16] Then Isaiah again assured the king that the Assyrian hosts should not only fail to conquer the city, but that they should not shoot one arrow into it.[17]

We are told that "an angel of the Lord went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians, a hundred and four-score and five thousand." [18] This

[15] Isa. 37: 7.
[16] Isa. 37: 20.
[17] Isa. 37: 33.
[18] Isa. 37: 35.

seems like an almost unbelievable circumstance, but its truthfulness is borne out both by biblical narrative and Assyrian inscription. What form this mysterious catastrophe took we cannot judge; it may have been a pestilence. But whatever form it took to human eyes, it was God working out his purposes through his inspired prophet. Twenty years later Sennacherib died by the hands of his own sons while worshiping in the temple of Nisroch. The prophecy of Isaiah was now complete; his political and religious mission was ended. His statesmanship had exceeded that of any other man of any generation, for he had not only saved his nation, but in saving it he had preserved that which was far more priceless — the nation's religion.

TOPICS FOR REPORTS AND INVESTIGATION

1. Isaiah as an Orator.
2. A Study of Assyria in the Eighth Century before Christ.
3. The Commercial History of Tyre.
4. Influence of Isaiah's Social Teaching on his Political Policies.
5. Isaiah's Political Message for the Present Age.

FURTHER READINGS

Fowler's "The Prophets as Statesmen and Preachers," Chaps. IV and V; Jordan's "Prophetic Ideas and Ideals," Chap. VII; Kirkpatrick's "Doctrine of the Prophets," Lecture 6; Cornill's "Prophets of Israel," pp. 56–70; G. A. Smith's "Isaiah," I-XXXIV ("Expositor's Bible"), Chaps. III, XI, XIII, XVII, and XVIII; articles on Isaiah in encyclopedias and Bible dictionaries.

CHAPTER IX

MICAH THE MORASTHITE

The last prophet of the eighth century was Micah, but we shall find more points of similarity between him and Amos, whose public ministry closed more than thirty years before Micah's began, than between him and Isaiah, his great contemporary. Amos and Micah were born in the country, in villages about seventeen miles apart, but the home of Amos was in the midst of a barren waste, while Micah lived in a fair and fertile valley. Like Amos, Micah traced the social wrongs of his day to city-dwellers. "*What is the transgression of Jacob? Is it not Samaria? And what are the high places of Judah? Are they not Jerusalem?*"[1]

The isolation of country life tends to develop an individualism that is keenly sensitive to social wrongs. The material prosperity that came during the reign of Uzziah had multiplied the wealth of the cities. When surplus wealth increases beyond the needs of trade and finance, the wealthy class turns to the country as a place for safe investment. With the advantages that wealth bestows, injustice is easy to practice. This condition was more apparent in Micah's day than in the days of Amos. Therefore Micah denounces the avarice of the land-hungry

[1] Mic. 1: 5.

investor from the city and the dishonest methods employed to satisfy this hunger. As we have seen, however, Isaiah was not indifferent to the perils of this situation.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

While it is impossible to assign dates to the period of Micah's ministry with certainty, it is supposed that he lived from about the period marked by the fall of Samaria (722 B. C.) to the beginning of the reign of Manasseh (about 690 B. C.). We are told in the introduction to his book [2] that he lived during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. He has been called a younger contemporary of Isaiah; if this be correct, he was almost a complete contemporary of this great prophet. We know very little, however, about his relation to any reign except that of Hezekiah. We are indebted to Jeremiah for the very interesting information that the great reformation of this great king was due to Micah.[3] The evils complained of by Micah were similar to those that characterized the speech of Isaiah. Certainly these social offences dated as far back as the reign of Jotham, and doubtless the prophecies of Micah were committed to writing not later than the reign of Ahaz. The reigns of these kings have been sufficiently described in the preceding studies.

SKETCH OF MICAH

Few details in the life of Micah have come down to us. It is to be regretted that the biblical record is so bare of authentic facts concerning the lives of the

[2] Mic. 1: 1.

[3] Jer. 26: 18, 19.

great social reformers of Israel. We are almost entirely dependent for our knowledge of the lives of these great men upon allusions found in their own writings, and as the prophets were so much more vitally concerned about the great truths they were presenting than the facts about themselves, in most cases these personal incidents have been vague and often of doubtful validity. As a result, what we know of them has to be constructed out of this scanty record, with an occasional supplemental note from Samuel or Kings.

This is the case with Micah. We know nothing of his parentage, and are indebted to Jeremiah for the suggestion that Micah was probably a native of Moresheth, which was located in the midst of a fertile plain of the Philistines to the southwest of Jerusalem, some seventeen miles from Tekoa, the home of Amos. Moresheth is probably the same as Moresheth-Gath (territory of Gath) which is mentioned by Micah himself.[4]

Micah, like Hosea, was a simple countryman, and sympathized deeply with the rural population, whose problems were familiar to him. He doubtless got his message and his consciousness of his public mission from the contrast between the conditions of the urban and rural population of Judah.

It is from this viewpoint that we get the contrast between Isaiah and Micah. The former was a man of the city, and probably of princely blood, while the latter was of humble origin and a man of the soil. This may account for the great difference in the practical interests of the two men. Micah was not

[4] Mic. 1: 14.

a statesman; he did not concern himself with the great political problems that confronted the nation, as did Isaiah. He does not allude to the foreign alliances which Judah made or desired to make, and which Isaiah always publicly condemned. On the other hand, Micah seemed to have a larger conception of the social evils of the cities.[5] The evils of Judah seemed to him to be concentrated in Jerusalem; and in the Northern Kingdom, Samaria appeared to be the center of national corruption.

The differences in the point of view of these two prophets may be traced to the differences in parentage, education, environment, and vision, but it is extremely interesting to observe that the two men were in agreement on fundamental social questions. First, they had the same fear concerning the social disorder that must come from conflict between class interests; secondly, both had the same passion for justice between man and man; and thirdly, each had intense pity for the poor and oppressed.

THE SOCIAL MESSAGE OF MICAH

Micah is peculiarly the prophet of social justice. The heart of his message is expressed in these wonderful words: "*He has showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God?*"[6]

We have here a three-fold classification of duties which seemed to Micah to need emphasis — *doing righteousness, exercising love, and maintaining di-*

[5] Mic. 1: 15; cp. 6:9.

[6] Mic. 6: 8.

vine fellowship with God. These duties are contrasted with the injustice, oppression, and perfunctory sacrificial service of the priests. In this brief but powerful summary, Micah defines man's duty to his neighbor and to his God. We may read into this verse also the culmination of the teaching of his predecessors and his great contemporary. Amos had given large emphasis to social justice; Hosea had made loving-kindness rather than sacrifice [7] the heart of his message; while Isaiah made the majesty of Jehovah emphatic, and insisted that humility towards God was a primal duty of man. We may reasonably conclude that the details in the social teachings of Micah which follow are simply an exposition of the great principle quoted above.

The social program of Micah may be summarized as follows:

(1) *Oppression and dispossession of the poor.* This was a sin against which Isaiah had preached with great vehemence. "*Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth.*" [8] These were the general terms used by Isaiah to express the social injustice of this thing, but Micah, who spoke as one who lived among those who were suffering this injustice, voiced the actual process, and brings us in contact with the real state of affairs. "*Woe to them that devise iniquity, and work evil upon their beds; when the morning is light, they practice it, because it is in the power of their hands. And they covet fields, and take them by violence; and houses, and take them away; so they op-*

[7] Hos. 6: 6. [8] Isa. 5: 8.

press a man and his house, even a man and his heritage." [9] We feel after reading these words that this is no imaginary social wrong, but that we stand face to face with a real situation. We see unscrupulous men of means as they scheme during the hours of night in their palatial homes as to how, on the morrow, they may dispossess some poor but legal owner of his small ancestral estate. It seems that the sin of Ahab, in his crime against Naboth, had come to be a precedent which had grown to be the greatest social sin of the generation of Micah and Isaiah.

(2) *Corrupt administration.* Privilege always accomplishes its ends under the sanction of law. Legal agencies are used for illegal purposes, and in oriental countries, more than in the West, that agency has been corrupt judges. So it was in this case. The judges were more than willing to lend a helping hand to a powerful prince or rich nobleman. "*The prince asketh, and the judge asketh for a reward; and the great man he uttereth his mischievous desire: so they wrap it up.*"[10] Can we conceive of a more heartless practice? By this wicked and unjust agreement, women were ejected from their happy and comfortable homes, and innocent children deprived forever of their birthright. Micah thought of these princes and judges who ought to have been the defenders and protectors of the poor, but who, instead, were actually robbing them of their means of existence. In his revolt at this injustice, he uttered one of the strongest condemnations that is to be found in all literature. "*They hate the good, and love the evil; who pluck off their skin from off*

[9] Mic. 2: 1-3. [10] Mic. 7: 3.

them, and their flesh from off their bones; who also eat the flesh of my people, and flay their skin from off them, and they brake their bones, and chop them in pieces, as for the pot, and as flesh within the cauldron." [11] George Adams Smith, commenting on these words, says: "These words of Micah are terribly strong, but there have been many other ages and civilizations than his own of which they have been no more than true. 'They crop us,' says a French peasant of the lords of the great Louis' time, 'as the sheep crops the grass.' 'They treat us like their food,' said another on the eve of the revolution."

(3) In a similar way, but on a smaller scale, the creditor shows the same disregard of justice and fair-dealing. Like a robber at night a man will tear from the body of a neighbor the cloak which happens to be a pledge for some debt, and leave him unprotected and shivering in the street.[12]

(4) The terrible consequence of all this social corruption is expressed in chapter seven. Distrust had become universal. Faith among men had ceased to exist. In the most sacred relations of life distrust had taken the place of confidence and faith, and suspicion pervaded the very atmosphere of the home. "*Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide; keep the door of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom. For the son dishonoureth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man's enemies are the men of his own house.*" [13] No moral teacher ever penetrated deeper into the ultimate consequences

[11] Mic. 3: 2, 3. [12] Mic. 2: 8. [13] Mic. 7: 5, 6.

of social wrong-doing than has Micah in these last words. Confidence tends to break down under the weight of selfishness and injustice, and the anti-social classes are augmented by these same conditions. When the home becomes anti-social, the basis of the social structure is disintegrated, and the organization of society is dissolved.

TOPICS FOR REPORTS AND INVESTIGATION

1. Similarity and Contrast of Micah and Isaiah.
2. The Common Social Teachings of the first Four writing Prophets.
3. The Rural Problems of Micah's Time.
4. The Message of Micah to our Times.
5. The Influence of Micah's Environment on his Social Teachings.

FURTHER READINGS

Willetts' "The Prophets of Israel," Chap. VIII, pp. 75–80; G. A. Smith's, "Twelve Prophets" ("Expositor's Bible"), Vol. I, Chap. XXIV, pp. 357–438; Sanders and Kent's "The Messages of the Earlier Prophets," pp. 111–129; Kirkpatrick's "The Doctrine of the Prophets," Chap. VII, pp. 203–235; Chamberlain's "The Hebrew Prophets," Chap. X, pp. 128–131; Jordan's "Prophetic Ideas and Ideals, Chap. IV, pp. 45–54; Petrie's "Israel's Prophets," Chap. VI, pp. 83–96; G. Campbell Morgan's "Living Messages of the Books of the Bible" (Job to Malachi), pp. 243–255; articles on Micah in Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias.

CHAPTER X

PERIOD OF REACTION AGAINST PROPHECY

The seventh century B. C. may be divided into three periods. First, the period of reaction and persecution during the reigns of Manasseh, and his son, Amon (about 690 to 639 B. C.); secondly, the earlier years of Josiah, the revival of prophecy by Zephaniah and Jeremiah (639 to 625 B. C.); thirdly, the decline and fall of Nineveh, and the period of the prophecy of Nahum and Habakkuk (625 to 600 B. C.). The period might naturally be made to close with the Fall of Jerusalem in 587–586 B. C. This chapter will be restricted to a brief review of the events of the first period in order that our study may be made continuous, and a better foundation laid for the social messages of the prophets of the subsequent periods.

In the preceding study, we learned that Micah brought about the reformation in the reign of Hezekiah, and in the study of the statesmanship of Isaiah we found that this prophet was a leading factor in the public administration of this same king. When King Hezekiah died it seems that all prophetic influence passed away with him. For the next half century the note of prophecy was almost silent. We are told in one place [1] that "The Lord spake by his

[1] II Kings 21: 10.

servants the prophets" during the reign of Manasseh, but we are left in ignorance concerning the names and work of these prophets during this entire period. Perhaps the bitter and bloody persecutions of the prophets by Manasseh drove these religious leaders into seclusion.

But are we justified in the conclusion that these were empty and fruitless years in the field of Jewish prophecy? We know from the reference above that prophets lived during this period, and some scholars [2] of note contend that some of the passages attributed to Amos [3] and Micah [4] were really spoken by prophets of this age. Disregarding these doubtful facts, we are reasonably safe in the conclusion that there were men of God who used their enforced seclusion, just as did the monks and friars of the Middle Ages, in arranging and copying the great addresses of the prophets of the previous century, and in codifying the laws handed down from Moses. Two great results may be traced to the work of the obscure prophets of this period. First, the excellent form of the Deuteronomic Law,[5] which was found about 621 B. C. during the reign of Josiah, may have been due to the persecuted prophets and priests of this period. Secondly, the telling messages of Zephaniah, Nahum, Jeremiah, and Habakkuk may have been the fruitage of this half-century of spiritual meditation on the social and religious problems of Judah.

[2] G. A. Smith's "Twelve Prophets" ("Expositor's Bible"), Vol. 2, p. 8; Sanders and Kent's "Messages of the Earlier Prophets," p. 188.

[3] Amos 5: 26f.

[4] Mic. 6: 9 to 7: 6.

[5] Deut. 12: 26.

THE REIGN OF MANASSEH

We cannot quite understand the reason for the complete reversal of the wholesome policies of Hezekiah by his son Manasseh. From the very beginning of his reign, he manifested a determination to undo all the good things that his father had done. We are told that he began to reign when he was twelve years of age, and we are also told that he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord. This young king probably fell into the hands of the opponents of Isaiah and the moral leaders of his time, and his mind was completely turned against the constructive influences of his country even before he reached manhood.

A summary of his evil policies reveals a sad state of affairs. He restored the idolatrous shrines and erected new altars for Baal throughout the land. He desecrated the temple and erected images of foreign gods in the vicinity of Jerusalem. He went further still. He suppressed as far as possible the religion of Jehovah, and in accomplishing this task he persecuted the adherents of the national religion, and shed innocent blood in his zeal to destroy the national faith. It was in this unholy undertaking that tradition tells us that he put Isaiah to death. The reaction against the ideals of the prophets Isaiah and Micah seemed complete. The faith of Jehovah and the social progress of these great moral leaders seemed to have been absolutely destroyed. It was truly an age of darkness.

THE REIGN OF AMON

Manasseh was succeeded by his son Amon, who be-

gan to reign at the age of twenty-two. His brief reign was characterized by the same policies that his father had favored. He met a tragic death at the hands of his servants in his own house, and this long period of darkness was soon to end. Josiah was destined to again restore the principles of Hezekiah which had been ignored for half a century.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

While these things were taking place in Judah, great events were occurring beyond her borders. Esarhaddon (681–668 B. C.) had succeeded Sennacherib on the throne of Assyria. Israel remained, as before, an Assyrian province, and Judah, as before, remained the vassal of the Assyrian king, and sent an annual tribute to Nineveh. Esarhaddon was an aggressive and ambitious monarch. He subdued the warlike tribes of Northern Arabia (675 B. C.), and during the following year he conquered the peninsula of Sinai. He pressed on into Egypt, and about 670 B. C. took Memphis. His death brought an end to his conquests. He was succeeded by Assurbanipal, who lost Egypt, but gained partial control of several important positions along the Nile a few years later. But the Assyrian Empire had become too vast, and a series of revolts — of Egypt, Arabia, Palestine, Elam, and Babylon — caused the rapid decline of this imperialistic empire.

Two significant events hastened the dissolution of this ambitious world-empire, the terrible invasion of the Scythians, and the threatening consolidation of the Medes against Nineveh. The Scythians broke forth like a storm from the coasts of the Black Sea,

and swept over Asia. For twenty years they spread death and terror over this entire region. The Medes had been conquered by Assyria as early as 830 B. C., and about a century later Sargon had banished the Ten Tribes of Israel into a part of their territory. By 650 B. C. they had become a great people, and the threatening invasion, which was finally made against Nineveh in 633 B. C., was feared by Assyria many years before the actual event. Under the weight of all these forces Assyria was destined to fall. As Cornill says in speaking of these events: "The Assyrian world-edifice cracked in all its joints."

It is at this point in the world's history that the note of prophecy is again heard above the confusion and conflict of nations. The voice of Zephaniah is the first to pronounce judgment on the world, and to remind Judah and Jerusalem of the dangers and penalties of social sins and religious neglect.

TOPICS FOR REPORTS AND INVESTIGATION

1. Foreign Relations during the Reign of Manasseh.
2. The Consequences of Manasseh's Religious Policy.
3. History of Egypt during the Period of Manasseh.
4. The Direct Contribution of Chronicles to an Understanding of the Reign of Manasseh.
5. The Scythian Invasion.

FURTHER READINGS

G. A. Smith's "Twelve Prophets" ("Expositor's Bible"), Vol. II, Chap. 1; Cornill's "The Prophets of Israel," pp. 71–80; Edersheim's "Bible History," Vol. VII, Chap. 14; "History of Assyria and Media"; Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias.

CHAPTER XI

ZEPHANIAH OF JERUSALEM

The title of the book expressly states that Zephaniah prophesied during the reign of Josiah, and there is sufficient internal evidence in the book to fully corroborate this fact. There is some question, however, as to whether his public ministry came in the early or latter part of this reign. Probably Zephaniah exercised his ministry before the great reform movement under Josiah. This would place his public ministry between 630 and 622 B. C.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In 639 B. C. Josiah, the twelve-year-old son of Amon, was placed on the throne as the consequence of a revolution that resulted in the death of his father, who had been permitted to rule for only two years. It seems that this royal youth came under the influence of the prophets and moral leaders of Judah, and that his education was directed into sympathy for the religious and social needs of his time.

The greatest event in the reign of Josiah was a thorough reformation. This included the abolition of idolatry, the repair of the temple, the discovery of the Book of the Law, and the national observance of the passover. It seems that this king was determined to make amends for all the evils of his father and grandfather.

It was while these reforms were in progress that the marauding hordes of Scythians swept down over Western Europe. Herodotus [1] tells us that they advanced southward to the borders of Egypt, and were only prevented from penetrating this country through the pleadings and gifts of Psammetichus, king of Egypt. For more than twenty years they overran and terrorized the whole of Western Asia. It is highly probable that the advance of these war-like intruders was the occasion of the prophecy of judgment pronounced upon Judah and Jerusalem by Zephaniah. "The great day of the Lord is near, and hasteth greatly" [2] may have been inspired by this event. It seems that Zephaniah's warning had its effect, and judgment was temporarily averted. The Scythians swept down along the coast through Philistia, but for some reason they did not turn from their route to molest Judah and Jerusalem.

SKETCH OF ZEPHANIAH

We are told in the introduction to the book of Zephaniah [3] that this prophet was a son of Cushi, and a descendant of Hezekiah. He was, therefore, of royal blood, and a descendant of one of Judah's greatest kings. We learn from this little book that he was also a native of Jerusalem. These facts support the contention that he was one of the advisers of Josiah during his minority, and doubtless was largely responsible for the great reforms undertaken by this king. The prophet's name means "Jehovah hath hidden," and probably suggests that he was born during the persecutions of Manasseh.

[1] "Herodotus," Vol. 1, pp. 105, 106.
[2] Zeph. 1: 14.
[3] Zeph. 1: 1.

Zephaniah has been designated as "the prophet as disciple," and "the prophet of judgment." Jordan uses the former expression to indicate the use the prophet makes of the writings of Isaiah. "By the substance of his thought, as well as the style of his teaching, this prophet is linked to Isaiah." [4] Duhm [5] on this point says: "Zephaniah is of importance to us less on his own account than because of his use of Isaiah. He shows what use a sober imitator can make of the master's material of thought." It also reenforces a thought expressed in the preceding chapter, i.e., that "the years of darkness" that preceded the age of Josiah were really years of study and preparation on the part of the prophets for their broader and deeper work in this age.

Zephaniah was no less a prophet of judgment. At the beginning we read, "I will utterly consume all things from off the land, saith the Lord." [6] We must not forget, however, that he knew how to mingle promise and hope with the judgments of Jehovah. "The Lord, thy God, in the midst of thee is mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over thee with singing." [7]

THE SOCIAL MESSAGE OF ZEPHANIAH

Two themes of primary importance in the messages of the prophets of the eighth century receive scant attention at the hands of Zephaniah. First, little effort is made to bring about social reform; and secondly, ideals of personal integrity and social rela-

[4] "Prophetic Ideals and Ideas," p. 110.
[5] Quoted by Jordan, *ib.* p. 110.
[6] Zeph. 1: 2.
[7] Zeph. 3: 17.

tions are largely ignored. His message was an elemental one, that of impending judgment, and all else is made subservient to this idea. But, incidentally, we get some of the social ideals of the prophet, for after pronouncing judgment, he feels called upon to name some of the offences that had brought on the wrath of Jehovah.

(1) The wickedness of princes will be one cause of judgment. "I will punish these princes, and the king's children, and all such as are clothed with strange apparel." [8] The prophet was not concerned with mere externals as such, but "strange apparel" represented sympathy and esteem for foreign fashion and imitations of custom. Zephaniah was doubtless thinking of the reign of Manasseh, when strange apparel led to the adoption of all the heathenish customs of Assyria, and the rejection of the moral and religious ideals of Judah.

(2) In the day of judgment, the unscrupulous merchant who has acquired wealth and ease through unfair and dishonest dealing shall come in for his punishment. On that fatal day, terror and wailing shall come from the fish-gate, and from the height where the wealthy live in their ease. "Howl, O dwellers in the merchant quarter, for when the foe appears your treasures and goods will be the first to be seized." [9] Clearly the prophet is here assuming that his hearers are familiar with the conditions under which these merchants acquired their wealth.

(3) The civil and religious rulers are unworthy of trust. "Her judges are evening wolves; they gnaw not the bones till the morrow. Her prophets

[8] Zeph. 1: 8.

[9] Zeph. 1: 10, 11.

are light and treacherous persons; her priests have polluted the sanctuary, they have done violence to the law." [10] This is a description of a terrible state of affairs. The judges are guilty of appropriating property that they are called upon to protect; the prophets are arrogant boasters and superficial leaders; the priests, instead of guarding, profane the sanctuary, and through ignorance misinterpret the law of God. What a contrast is this with the justness of God and the purity of his purposes! [11]

(4) The last element in the social message of Zephaniah is new to Jewish prophecy, and one of the most important factors in the socializing process. He pronounces the most certain doom upon the man who is *indifferent* to public welfare. He declares that God will use the greatest diligence in searching out this class. "I will search Jerusalem with lights," is the way God speaks to the prophet. There can be no escape for this class. Punishment is certain to come to those "that say in their heart, Jehovah will not do good, neither will He do evil." [12] This is a vivid word representation of the indifferent who have no faith, who develop infidelity out of listlessness. Peace and security of life had come to the people through the good administration of Josiah, but instead of using it for active, useful service in making the good times perpetual, many had fallen away into selfish pleasure and idle obscurity.

G. A. Smith's comment on this passage is notable and worthy of recall: "All this starts questions for

[10] Zeph. 3: 3, 4.

[11] See Keil and Delitzsch, Vol. II, p. 131, for full interpretation of this message. The above interpretation is taken from Strauss.

[12] Zeph. 1: 12.

ourselves. Here is evidently the same public temper which at all periods provokes alike the despair of the reformer and the indignation of the prophet — the criminal apathy of the well-to-do classes sunk in ease and religious indifference. We have today the same mass of obscure, nameless persons, who oppose their almost unconquerable inertia to every movement of reform, and are the drag upon all vital and progressive religion. The great causes of God and humanity are not defeated by the hot assaults of the devil, but by the slow, crushing, glacierlike mass of thousands and thousands of indifferent nobodies. *God's causes are never destroyed by being blown up, but by being sat upon.*" [13] These are wise words and express a thought that needs constant repetition. But for the original insight into this important element of human nature, and its sinister influence on the developing social order, we must give credit to Zephaniah not only for its first recognition, but also for an adequate appreciation of its detrimental effects on national life and character.

TOPICS FOR REPORTS AND INVESTIGATION

1. Influence of Isaiah on the Ministry of Zephaniah.
2. The Religious Reformation of Josiah.
3. Huldah the Prophetess.
4. A Judgment against Nations (Zeph. 2: 4–15).
5. Jehovah in the Book of Zephaniah.

FURTHER READINGS

Kent's "Kings and Prophets of Israel and Judah" ("The Historical Bible") pp. 192–198; Jordan's "Prophetic Ideas and Ideals," pp. 110-118; Sanders

[13] Twelve Prophets, Vol. II, p. 54.

and Kent's "The Messages of the Earlier Prophets," pp. 187–197; G. A. Smith's "Twelve Prophets" ("Expositor's Bible"), Vol. II, pp. 35–73; Kirkpatrick's "The Doctrine of the Prophets," pp. 258–268; articles on Zephaniah in Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias.

CHAPTER XII

NAHUM THE ELKOSHITE

The Jewish prophets consumed no time in the formulation of a constructive social program. All of them assumed social responsibility for their own people. Nahum, like Amos, took for granted a universal, moral, and social responsibility, and he condemned Nineveh, the proud capital of Assyria, for the same inhuman practices which were attributed to the neighbors of the Hebrews by Amos, in the preceding century. Nahum, like other prophets, directed his message to the concrete problems of his age. In exile, the prophet saw in proud and corrupt Nineveh the source of all the miseries of his own people. If this worldly city could be destroyed, his people would be freed, and their former glory would be made possible. The prophet's vision is that of Jehovah acting in his wrath to destroy a city whose prosperity had been bought by blood and covetousness.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The date of the prophecy is sufficiently determined to justify the conclusion that it came while Judah was still under the Assyrian yoke, and doubtless at this time Assyrian oppression and the demands for large tribute to help carry out the imperial plans of Assyria proved quite distressing to Judah. Assy-

rian inscriptions often refer to the tribute paid by Judah, which was used to promote friendly foreign alliances or to buy off some dangerous foe.

The most important historical events of Nahum's age have already been indicated in the preceding chapter. In order more fully to grasp the message and motive of Nahum's prophecy, it may be well briefly to recall a few events already referred to and to supplement this record with a few additional facts.

As early as the middle of the ninth century, northern Israel began to feel the pressure of Assyrian power. Several attempts were made to resist this power, with more or less success, but when Jehu, who overthrew the house of Ahab, came to the throne, he was forced to pay a tribute to this growing power on the north. The reign of Jeroboam II was blessed by Assyrian inactivity, and Judah then experienced its last peaceful reign before its final overthrow by the capture of Samaria by Assyria in 722 B. C. Shortly after the death of Jereboam II, Ahaz, against the advice and counsel of the great Isaiah, made Judah tributary to Assyria. Judah continued to pay tribute with more or less regularity until Josiah came to the throne.

In the meantime, the kings of Assyria had waged war against Egypt, and for a time it was not certain whether the seat of power was to remain in the north or to be transferred to the Egyptian kingdom on the south. During the period, many hostile armies were located on Judean soil, and no doubt this little intermediate country suffered greatly from foreign invasion. Nineveh had become a great and prosperous

city as a result of national prosperity and imperial conquests.

SKETCH OF NAHUM

But one hint is given concerning the life of this prophet, and that is of doubtful value. The opening verse of the book calls him, "Nahum the Elkoshite," which identifies him with a village of uncertain locality. The village Elkosh has been variously located. Some have identified it with Al-kush, which seems to have been near Nineveh; others have thought the village was located in Galilee, while others have thought it to have been a village of southern Judah. The question cannot be determined with certainty.

The prophecy of Nahum may be placed between 660 B. C. and 605 B.C. This makes him a contemporary of Zephaniah. Some have thought that Nahum's public ministry slightly preceded that of Zephaniah and the other members of this group.[1] Two important events at least seem to fix the period of this prophecy. It must have been made after the capture of Thebes by Ashurbanipal, which was about 660 B. C., for he says: "Art thou better than populous No [Thebes], that was situated among the rivers [Nile], whose rampart was the sea, and her wall was from the sea?" On the other hand, the prophecy seems to have occurred before the fall of Nineveh, which was not far from the close of the century (about 607 B. C.). We are doubtless justi-

[1] Kirkpatrick, and Sanders and Kent place Nahum before Zephaniah, while G. A. Smith and Jordan reverse the chronological order. However, the question is not of great importance.

fied in the conclusion that the prophecy came comparatively early in the period, probably between 640 or 635 B. C.

SOCIAL SINS OF NINEVEH

The third chapter of Nahum is devoted to the consideration of the social offences of this proud and worldly city of Nineveh. As we have found so often repeated in the history of city-building, with growth and commercial advantage had come shameless violence, cruel greed, and unrestrained license. The prophet permits us to view with him the vision of the terrible days of retribution that came to this city with the last days of the Assyrian Empire. The city of blood, the city of lies and robbery, is at last to reap its reward of violence. We can see the rush of chariots, and hear the crack of whips; we watch the approach of the victorious army, and behold with horror the corpses strewn in confused masses along the street. "Nineveh is laid waste; who will bemoan her? Whence shall I seek comforters for thee?"[2] Certainly not in Israel and Judah, for they have suffered too much from the arrogant hand of this despoiler.

Nahum has been called the "prophet of vengeance." The title has justification, but there is more to his message than mere satisfaction at the contemplated destruction of a great city, even if that city did stand for the oppression of this prophet's people. The first chapter of Nahum is written in poetry. It teaches that while Jehovah will not spare the guilty, he is a God of patience and goodness.

[2] Nah. 3: 7.

"Jehovah is long-suffering and great in might,
Yet He will not absolve." [3]

Again:

"Good is Jehovah to them that wait upon Him in the day of trouble,
And He knoweth them that trust Him." [4]

This poetic first chapter does, however, ascribe to Jehovah the attributes of jealousy for righteousness and the avenging hand:

"A God jealous and avenging is Jehovah;
Jehovah is avenger and lord of wrath;
Vengeful is Jehovah towards His enemies,
And implacable He to His foes." [5]

Has Nahum no message for Judah? All his great predecessors naturally spoke and wrote to their own people, but here we have a prophet who seems to devote most of his thought, if not all of it, to the prediction of the destruction of a foreign city. Undoubtedly the message was one of encouragement to his own people. He not only speaks to them of the goodness of God and reminds them that God knows those who trust Him, but he tells them emphatically that the oppressor of God's people is to be destroyed, and that they are to escape from Assyrian bondage. The people of God, however, are not permitted to see that a severer chastisement is to come to them from the rising power of Babylonia.

The teaching of Nahum was not so comprehensive as that of Zephaniah, but each gave prominence to one idea. Zephaniah sought to make impressive the

[3] Nah. 1: 3. [4] Nah. 1: 7. [5] Nah. 1: 2.

judgment of Jehovah, while Nahum gave direct emphasis to the vengeance of God. But, as we have seen, the earlier prophet illustrated his doctrine of judgment with specific social sins of his people for which judgment would come. We cannot say that Nahum had any distinct social message at all, except as such a message is implied in his description of the woes that were to come upon Nineveh on account of its wickedness. But we must not restrict the prophecy of Nahum to one historical event, for, to the prophet, Nineveh was simply a type of those powers that work at cross purposes with the plans of God, and the destruction predicted of Nineveh applies to all kingdoms and cities of the world that ignore the will of God and that follow the paths of injustice and social corruption.

TOPICS FOR REPORTS AND INVESTIGATION

1. The Date of Nahum's Prophecy.
2. Closing Days of Assyria and the Fall of Nineveh.
3. The Importance of Nahum's Prophecy to Judah.
4. Nahum's Conception of Jehovah.
5. Nineveh in Bible History.

FURTHER READINGS

Jordan's "Prophetic Ideas and Ideals," pp. 120-127; Sanders and Kent's "Messages of the Earlier Prophets," pp. 173-183; G. A. Smith's "Twelve Prophets" ("Expositor's Bible"), Vol. II, pp. 77-112; Kirkpatrick's "The Doctrine of the Prophets," pp. 239-257; Articles on Nahum in Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias; Morgan G. Campbell's "Living Messages of the Books of the Bible" (Job to Malachi), pp. 257-271.

CHAPTER XIII

HABAKKUK

Habakkuk was another contemporary of Zephaniah and Nahum, but probably his public ministry came slightly later than the most active part of their ministries. He was doubtless more completely a contemporary of Jeremiah (627–586 B. C.), and possibly came during the second period of this prophet's ministry. From Habakkuk's own writings we are disposed to place the date of his public ministry just before the victory of Nebuchadnezzar over Pharaoh-necho at Carchemish, since the prophet declares that the Egyptian army is to be brought up to punish Judah, and speaks of it as a future event.[1] This event occurred in the fourth year of Jehoiakim's reign.[2] This would place his prophecy very close to the end of the seventh century, as Jehoiakim began to reign in 609 B. C.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

If the date of Habakkuk is closely approximated above, we can definitely indicate some of the historical events that occurred during his life. Josiah began to reign in 639 B. C. and ruled Judah for thirty-one years. His reforms were outlined in our study of Zephaniah. Josiah lost his life in the battle of Me-

[1] Hab. 1: 5-11. [2] Jer. 42: 2.

giddo [3] when he attempted to resist the passage of Pharaoh-necho through the country on his way to wage war against Assyria. Possibly Josiah lost his life in an effort to fulfill his allegiance to Assyria, to whom Judah had paid tribute for many years. Jehoahaz was made king of Judah by the people instead of Jehoiakim, the eldest son of Josiah. But after the short space of three months he was deposed by Pharaoh-necho, who for a brief time exercised dominion over the entire territory from the Euphrates to the Nile, and placed on the throne the eldest son of the king. Jehoiakim was a selfish despot, who had no regard for the religious traditions of his people, and soon all the old evils of Manasseh's day sprang up on every side. This condition must have been exceedingly discouraging to the reform leaders of Israel, for undoubtedly the moral conditions of Judah were worse in 600 B. C. than they were a century earlier.

Meanwhile, a storm cloud was rising in the north. The Babylonians had risen in many determined revolts against Assyrian power in the five centuries that this great empire had ruled over most of her neighboring peoples, but not until Nabopolasser became governor of Babylon were her efforts successful. Nineveh was taken and leveled to the ground in 605 B. C. Soon after, Pharaoh-necho was overwhelmingly defeated on the Euphrates by Nebuchadnezzar, son of Nabopolasser, and all of Syria and Palestine were left at the mercy of the ferocious conquerors. Judah had paid out much tribute to the Assyrians, but in turn she had been permitted to

[3] II Kings 23: 29.

enjoy comparative quiet and protection. For the few months that Egypt had exercised dominion over this little nation, she had been permitted to remain unmolested, merely transferring her allegiance from one power to another. But a new hand was now raised with its scepter of power, and Judah had heard in advance of the ferocious character and insatiable ambition of this new conqueror.

How could conditions be more discouraging? At home, the spirit of lawlessness and irreverence toward God prevailed; beyond, an unreasonable foe that was known to recognize no law except that of brute force and insatiable greed was approaching.

SKETCH OF HABAKKUK

Nothing definite is known of the details connected with the life of this prophet. He is spoken of as a prophet in the beginning of his book.[4] The conclusion of his psalm [5] has led some to infer that Habakkuk was officially authorized to share in the responsibility of directing the liturgical singing of the temple, which justifies the further inference that he was connected with one of the Levitical families, and, therefore, a descendant of the priestly tribe of Levi. He has been called " the prophet of scepticism," but this seems to be too strong a term. He was more nearly the prophet of perplexed understanding. He seems to have been a man of deep religious belief, but when he measured his faith with the facts of life, he was unable to harmonize them. His book seems to be the direct product of this long mental struggle.

[4] Hab. 1: 1. [5] Hab. 3: 19.

THE MESSAGE OF THE BOOK

It seems best to regard the Book of Habakkuk as a single prophecy divided into two parts. Part one consists of a dialogue between the prophet and God; the second part is an exalted prayer in poetic form in which the prophet seeks the fulfilment of promised judgment. The majesty of God is recognized, and his faith that God will destroy the wicked and save his people is acknowledged.

The nearest approach to a distinctive social message then follows. Attention is directed to those social derelictions of the Chaldeans that ultimately resulted in their destruction. The indictment is contained in five strophes consisting of three verses, and each is introduced with a woe of condemnation. (1) Rapacity and plundering is the first to be named and condemned:[6] (2) The Chaldeans had attempted to establish a permanent nation upon violence and cunning:[7] (3) This wicked nation had attempted to build up its cities by murder and injustice:[8] (4) Drunkenness and intemperance generally had been permitted and encouraged among subjected nations:[9] (5) Idolatry and the worship of heathen gods was the last of the offences charged up to this false and wicked nation.[10] A nation guilty of such offences could not endure, for "The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him" is the way the message closes.

These words form the transition to what is usually called the prayer of Habakkuk. The message was

[6] Hab. 2: 6-8. [8] Hab. 2: 12-14. [10] Hab. 2: 18-20.
[7] Hab. 2: 9-11. [9] Hab. 2: 15-17.

now clear to the prophet, but on one point there was still anxiety — fulfillment was to be long delayed, and the prophet feared that this would weaken the faith of the righteous in Israel. His questioning now ceased, and he resorted to prayer that accomplishment of God's purposes might come as speedily as possible.

" O Jehovah, I have heard the report of thee, and am afraid;
O Jehovah, revive thy work in the midst of the years;
In the midst of the years make it known;
In wrath remember mercy." [11]

The answer comes in a vision of the past acts of Jehovah, and a larger conception of God's dealings with men. The poetic prayer closes with due confession that God has answered all questioning and prayer.

" Jehovah, the Lord, is my strength,
And He maketh my feet like hinds' feet,
And will make me to walk upon my high places." [12]

Has Habakkuk a message for our own times or is his little book shorn of its potential value by age? The external elements of violence and bloodshed are not so common now, but some of the other conditions of Habakkuk's age are common today. Evil in a different form is widespread, and there exists today the same impatience at the slow advance of the good. The extent of the various forms of social injustice have led some to question whether righteousness will

[11] Hab. 3: 2. [12] Hab. 3: 19.

ever prevail over the forces of evil.[13] To all of these the message and teaching of Habakkuk comes with peculiar force.

We also are taught the lesson that comes with equal emphasis; in studying the providences of God we must view the facts of life in all their relations. Intolerance is often the result of viewing conduct from some angular point of view. Faith in the integrity of the social order and patience to wait for God's readjustments are essential according to the message of Habakkuk, and this is a message of real need in the age in which we live.

TOPICS FOR REPORTS AND INVESTIGATION

1. The Chaldeans (Babylonians) in Bible History.
2. The Dramatic Elements of this Book.
3. Political Conditions of Judah as Revealed by Habakkuk.
4. Religious Conditions of Judah as Revealed by Habakkuk.
5. Internal Evidence of the Date of Authorship.

FURTHER READINGS

Kirkpatrick's "The Doctrine of the Prophets," pp.

[13] See Alfred Russel Wallace's "Social Environment and Moral Progress," Chap. III and XIII. This author begins with the thesis that character has remained stationary from the earliest periods of history. After analyzing the social phenomena of the past century, he reaches the following remarkable conclusion: "Taking account of these various groups of undoubted facts, many of which are so gross, so terrible, that they cannot be overstated, it is not too much to say that our whole system of society is rotten from top to bottom, and the social environment as a whole, in relation to our claims, is the worst that the world has ever seen." (Chap. XIII, p. 169.)

269-290; Jordan's "Prophetic Ideas and Ideals," pp. 130-137; G. A. Smith's "Twelve Prophets" ("Expositor's Bible"), pp. 115-159; Sanders and Kent's "Messages of the Earlier Prophets," pp. 219-226; Morgan G. Campbell's "Living Messages of the Books of the Bible" (Job to Malachi), pp. 273-286; Habakkuk in Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias.

CHAPTER XIV

JEREMIAH OF ANATHOTH

The book of Jeremiah is a wonderful combination of biography, history, and prophecy, and in importance is second only to the Book of Isaiah. The book possesses deep human interest, and the facts presented supply information about some of the most important events of biblical history. The chapters of the book are not arranged in chronological order, and no study of Jeremiah's social message can be discussed from the chapter-order of arrangement. This study will deal with the social ethics of Jeremiah, and will be followed in the next chapter by a study of the prophet's social message in relation to the political events of his time.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Jeremiah's public ministry extended over a period of about half a century (627–577 B. C.) — a period of mighty changes and political upheavals. His call came in the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah.[1] Jeremiah was a contemporary of Nahum, Zephaniah, and Habakkuk, and was the last of this great group of moral leaders of Israel and Judah.

The beginning of Jeremiah's ministry was marked by a historic situation that, on the surface, pointed toward peace and moral awakening. In the first

[1] Jer. 1: 2.

place, Judah was enjoying practical independence, as the power of Assyria was weakening. Secondly, the great religious reformation of the young king, Josiah, was just beginning.[2] Surely in such a time as this the people were not prepared for the message of judgment which the Lord directed Jeremiah to deliver. The vision of the "*rod of an almond tree*"[3] and that of the "*seething pot*"[4] must have seemed strange to Jeremiah himself, and to the masses of the people it could have had no meaning in such promising times as these. That "out of the north an evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land"[5] must have seemed far-fetched to the people of Judah just at this time.

In fact, for the first eighteen years of the ministry of Jeremiah there was little indication that the visions were to become real or that the judgment of the Lord was to be fulfilled. During this period Jeremiah seems to have had some hope that the impending calamity might be averted. "Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place"[6] is the conditional promise held out to the people at this period of his ministry. But hope was not to be held out to Judah much longer. On the battle field of Megiddo, Josiah was slain by Pharaoh-

[2] II Chron. 34: 3.

[3] Jer. 1: 11. "'As a rod,' says Dahler, 'is an instrument of punishment, the rod of the almond may be intended here as the symbol of that punishment which the prophet was about to announce.'" — Clark. See also Ball's "Jeremiah" ("Expositor's Bible"), p. 61.

[4] Jer. 1: 13. "The pot denotes the empire of the Babylonians and Chaldeans lying to the north of Judea, and pouring forth its multitudes like a thick vapor." — Clark.

[5] Jer. 1: 14.

[6] Jer. 7: 3.

necho, and Judah's last hope was gone. The tone of Jeremiah's message now changes. From this time on the sin of Judah is written with a "pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond," [7] and the reply of the people to Jehovah's invitation to turn from evil ways is: "It is in vain, for we will walk after our own devices, and we will do every one after the stubbornness of his evil heart." [8]

Four weak kings followed each other in rapid succession on the throne of Judah as the nation hastened to its final and complete downfall. Jehoahaz, the second son of Josiah, was placed on the throne to succeed this great king, but after the short period of three months he was compelled to abdicate by Pharaoh-necho, who carried him into Egypt. The eldest son of Joshiah, Jehoiakim, was now elevated to the throne. It was during his reign that the great battle of Carchemish (605 B. C.) was fought. The Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar completely defeated the forces of Egypt under Necho, and gave over to this rising power the supremacy of Western Asia.[9] A second invasion of the Babylonians shortly after drove the Egyptians back into their own land, and appropriated all their tributary possessions.[10] This included Judah, and Jehoiakim became the vassal of the Babylonian king. Three years later, as a result of his rebellion, he was probably slain while resisting the forces of Babylon. His son, Jehoiachin, succeeded him, and continued the rebellion until he was captured after three months and carried away a captive to Babylon. He was succeeded by Zedekiah,

[7] Jer. 17: 1.
[8] Jer. 18: 12.
[9] Jer. 46: 2-27.
[10] II Kings 24: 7.

the youngest son of Josiah, who was destined to have his name connected with the final downfall of Judah. He doubtless resented from the beginning the supremacy of Babylon, and when Pharaoh-hophra came to the throne of Egypt a secret alliance was formed, and Zedekiah rebelled against Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar with a great army was quick to act. The city of Jerusalem was besieged, and after eighteen months of famine and privation the city fell. Zedekiah was captured, and after his sight was destroyed he was carried captive into Babylon.

SKETCH OF JEREMIAH

In the midst of these troublous times Jeremiah lived and prophesied in Judah. We have more information concerning the details of the life of Jeremiah than any other prophet. He came from the village of Anathoth, which was located a short distance northeast of Jerusalem. He was a son of Hilkiah, and came, therefore, from a priestly family. The call of Jehovah came to him in the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah, which was about 627 B. C., but he does not seem to have been very definitely identified with the reforms of Josiah. It seems that in the earlier period of his public ministry he worked very quietly and unobtrusively. His first aggressive work seems to have come in the reign of Jehoiakim, when he dared to assert that destruction awaited both the temple and the city. This aroused violent opposition to the prophet, and his life was threatened. He was saved only with difficulty, and on condition that he was not to proclaim his teachings in the temple. Later on in the reign of Jehoiakim, when

Baruch, a friend and pupil of the prophet, was reading the written discourses of Jeremiah in the temple, the king heard of it, and ordered the scribe to read them in his presence. Before the reading was finished the king cut the manuscript in pieces and cast them into the fire, and then ordered the arrest of Jeremiah and Baruch. Both, however, were able to keep out of the way of the king's officers and thereby avoided arrest.

The reign of Zedekiah brought better days to Jeremiah. This king undoubtedly held the prophet in high esteem, but public opinion had to be considered. Jeremiah was not in favor with the people; so the king could not follow and be guided by the prophet as doubtless he would have liked to have been. In the fourth year of the reign of Zedekiah, a significant event occurred in which Jeremiah was the chief character.

All the neighboring nations sent ambassadors up to Jerusalem for the purpose of planning concerted opposition and resistance to Nebuchadnezzar. There was overwhelming sentiment in favor of resistance, but in the midst of the proceedings Jeremiah appeared with a yoke about his neck and proclaimed that it was best for all these nations to bow their necks to the Chaldean yoke. Then a remarkable thing happened. Hananiah, a popular prophet, took the yoke off the neck of Jeremiah, and broke it in the presence of all the representatives, and declared that in like manner they would break the yoke of the king of Babylon. Jeremiah's words in response are significant: "Thou hast broken the yokes of wood; but in their stead shall come yokes

of iron." [11] These words turned the tide of opposition. Jeremiah's position was vindicated, the deliberations came to naught, and no formal action was taken.

Jeremiah was also consulted when Zedekiah was considering the advisability of throwing off the yoke of Babylonian bondage, and advised against the step. But his advice this time was unheeded, and, with the promised help of Egypt, a revolt followed which resulted in the overthrow of the Jewish kingdom, and the captivity of the king and people.

Jeremiah survived the siege, and was permitted to remain in Judah. His prophecies had been vindicated, and it seemed as if the time had come for the due recognition of his greatness. But this was not to be. He was taken by his enemies into Egypt, where tradition tells us he was stoned to death.

SOCIAL ETHICS OF JEREMIAH

The largest social message of Jeremiah deals with human rights. In Jeremiah we approach nearest to a discussion of the concrete problem of human slavery. It is strange that all the prophets practically defend the needy and the oppressed, but none deal concretely with the question of slavery. In fact, slavery was an accepted order of human relations among the Hebrews, as it was among other primitive nations. One passage from the book of Leviticus will illustrate this:

"As for thy bondmen ["*ebed*"] and thy bondmaids ["*amah*"] whom thou shalt have; of the nations round about you, of them shall ye buy bond-

[11] Jer. 29: 13.

men and bondmaids. Moreover, of the children of the strangers that sojourn among you, of them shall ye buy, and of their families that are with you, which they have begotten in your land; and they shall be your possession. And ye shall make them for an inheritance for your children after you, to hold for a possession. Of them shall ye take your bondmen forever." [12]

Few have realized the emphatic recognition given to slavery in the Bible, of which this passage is an illustration. The injunction against the sin of covetousness, as stated in the tenth commandment, accepts slavery as an institution, and recognizes slaves as property, as does the passage cited above.

But in spite of this general recognition, slavery must have constituted a very small feature of the social life of the Hebrew people, for the few glimpses that we get of slavery are of little importance, and the further fact that the great moral leaders did not see fit to denounce it is sufficient evidence that it had not become a problem of such magnitude as to disturb the social order.

In the time of Jeremiah, however, the system brought to the surface, as it always will in time, elements of injustice. The facts are briefly these: When Jerusalem was besieged by Nebuchadnezzar, the rulers were compelled to resort to the revival of the ancient custom of liberating slaves every six years in order to secure soldiers in sufficient numbers to resist the siege. To meet this exigency, the slaves were solemnly liberated. But when the danger was over, these liberated slaves were compelled to return to

[12] Lev. 25: 44-46.

servitude. Against this act of broken faith, Jeremiah hurled his most terrible words of resentment.[13] He told his people that they had broken faith and were guilty of perjury and were doomed to destruction by war, and that Zedekiah and the princes were to be carried away captives. These words aroused the intense opposition of the nobles, and Jeremiah was cast into prison on a false charge of treason. His prophecy was soon to be fulfilled, however, and through the mediation of Zedekiah he was released.

The institution of the family was also threatened again in the days of Jeremiah. Adultery was widely practiced. Jeremiah bitterly complains that "the land is full of adulterers." [14] Even some of the prophets are guilty of this offence for "they commit adultery, and walk in lies, they strengthen the hands of evil doers that none doth return from his wickedness." [15] At a later date Jeremiah, in a letter to the exiled Jews in Babylon, charges that Zedekiah and Ahab, who are holding out false hope of speedy restoration, "have committed adultery with their neighbors' wives, and have spoken lying words." [16] It is interesting to observe that the prophet, almost in every case, connects this sin with that of falsehood. This is a sin that breaks down and destroys the moral fiber of the nation. "They are all of them," says the prophet, "unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah." This sin, then, was a reality; it was no figurative analogy or literary symbol that the prophet had here under discussion.

However, Jeremiah, like Hosea, used this real con-

[13] Jer. 34: 12-22.
[14] Jer. 23: 10.
[15] Jer. 23: 14.
[16] Jer. 29: 23.

dition to illustrate the proper relations that should have existed between God and Israel. He appeals to sentiment by representing *Yahveh* as saying, "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown." [17] In contrast with this happy relation, the prophet makes *Yahveh* say, "My covenant they brake, although I was a husband to them." [18] The high ideals of domestic life are more easily realized from the figurative use that is made of the marriage relation than from the literal teachings concerning it. The relation of Israel to *Yahveh* was the most intimate, sympathetic and enduring of all. The prophets could think of no more appropriate figure to illustrate the relation than that of human marriage, which to them stood for all those attributes that they wished to see realized in the relations of the nation to Jehovah.

Jeremiah's interview with the Rechabites brings into prominence a primitive sect that had consistently protested against agrarian culture and supported their belief with religious zeal. The founder of the sect was Jehonadab, and he named it after his father, Rechab. The order seems to have originated during the bloody revolution of Jehu. We are told [19] of the meeting of these two men. After Jehu had saluted Jehonadab he took him into his chariot, saying, "Come with me and see my zeal for *Yahveh*." This incident, occurring in the Book of Kings without essential relation to the tragical history there recorded, has presented serious difficulty to the Bible

[17] Jer. 2: 8. [18] Jer. 31: 32. [19] II Kings 10: 15–17.

student, but the difficulty is largely overcome when interpreted in the light of other passages in the Old Testament.

The sect evidently had its beginning in a protest against the insecurity of life and property that existed in the days of Jehu. Conditions under which Jehonadab was reared were not unlike the social situation in the days of Rousseau's boyhood. The revolution under Jehu has many points of similarity to that of the French revolution. The conditions that inspired Rousseau's "*Discourse on Inequality*" [20] were strikingly like the conditions that caused the Rechabites to renounce the ownership of houses, vineyards, and fields, and solemnly commit their lives to religious nomadism. So devoted were these people to their faith that they disavowed the planting of seed because this would necessitate the possession of fields, and they drank no wine because the culture of grapes would make the ownership of vineyards necessary.

Rousseau's "State of Nature" was not dissimilar to this doctrine of the Semitic Rechabites. So consistently did these people obey the letter of their faith that we find Jeremiah contrasting the disobedience of the Jews toward Jehovah with the fidelity and loyalty of the Rechabites.

However, we must not be too hasty to attribute moral superiority to the Rechabites as compared with agrarian Jews. This sect had renounced the elementary principles of potential progress, the only thing that could raise them in the scale of civilization. While the Jews were meeting with tempta-

[20] See Morley's "Rousseau," Chap. II and V.

tions, they were also organizing for social progress. The mistake of the Rechabites was in adopting an easy code of static faith; the mistake of the Jews was in repudiating ideals that were wholesome in themselves.

Social conditions caused several of the preëxilic prophets to sympathize with the faith of the Rechabites. Elijah and Elisha were advocates of a simpler Jehovism which they sought under nomadic conditions. "I will yet again make thee to dwell in tents," says Hosea [21] as a solution to the social and ethical problem. And Jeremiah makes Jehovah say, "I remember for thee the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals; how thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in the land that was not sown." [22] It was easy to see that agrarianism had produced social disorders that were unknown to nomadism. In an attempt to think through this situation, the first solution that naturally suggested itself was a reversion to nomadic life. It was natural that these prophets should suggest this, but it is also fortunate that they later saw the larger significance of the social problem. These prophets lived before the days when men thought in terms of the *pathology of progress*.[23] The derelictions of the Jews were largely the results of untried or new experiences. "The discovery of diffusion and the transmission from age to age of the knowledge, beliefs, ideas, and ideals by which men have found it possible to conquer nations and live to-

[21] Hos. 12: 9.

[22] Jer. 2: 2.

[23] This phrase is used as a chapter heading (Chapter IV) in Professor Farnam's "The Economic Utilization of History."

gether in well-ordered groups" is civilization.[24] There is always a sorry by-product to civilization that is hard to reconcile with progress. This was the stumbling block of the Rechabite, the Nazarite, and the prophet.

Jeremiah, like his predecessors and contemporaries, directed attention to some of these social by-products. He repeatedly condemns his people for the crime of murder, and attention is repeatedly called to the indifference to the sacredness of human life,[25] and the trivial defences offered for taking it. Murder was the outgrowth of the practices of oppression and minor forms of violence to which the poor and defenceless were subjected by the rich and powerful. Jeremiah, therefore, condemned all these as a disregard of personal rights.[26]

An indifference to personal rights always makes property rights insecure. We are not surprised, therefore, when we read Jeremiah's charge that stealing and robbery were practiced by the Jews. In a summary of offences, Jeremiah mentions theft first in chapter seven, verse nine. He pronounces woe upon "him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by injustice; that useth his neighbor's services without wages, and giveth him not his hire; that saith, I will build me a wide house and spacious chambers, and cutteth him out windows, and it is ceiled with cedar, and painted with vermilion." [27] Covetousness is repeatedly condemned [28] by Jeremiah. The term as used by the prophet prac-

[24] Ellwood's "The Social Problem," p. 20.
[25] Jer. 2: 34f; 7: 10; 22: 3, 17.
[26] Jer. 7: 6; 22: 3.
[27] Jer. 22: 13-14.
[28] Jer. 6: 13; 8: 10; 22: 17.

tically means "plunder" or goods gotten by violent or dishonest means.[29]

Jeremiah emphasized truthfulness as an important social virtue. To him it included trustworthiness.[30] The prophet was grieved because this virtue was so sadly lacking in his day. His failure to find it caused him to declare that "truth is perished." Falsehood was so universally practiced as to give no place for truth. "They bend their tongue," he says, "as it were their bow for falsehood," [31] and again in the same chapter he says, "They will deceive every one his neighbor, and will not speak the truth; they have taught their tongues to speak lies; they weary themselves to commit iniquity." [32]

Idolatry [33] and unbelief [34] had accomplished their deadly work. These were the seed that were sown in the soil of demoralization and national dissolution. These seed brought forth a tree whose fruits were falsehood and broken faith, selfishness and injustice, murder and adultery. "Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that doeth justly, that seeketh truth, and I will pardon it." [35] This was a liberal proposition, and the fact that it was not accepted bears mute testimony to the extent of moral degradation.

In the midst of such religious corruption and moral decay the prophet offers a prayer to Jehovah, and then writes the epitaph for his nation. In his prayer he pleads for correction, and for judgment on

[29] Mitchell's "Ethics of the Old Testament," p. 207.
[30] Ib. p. 208. Jer. 7: 28; cp. 5: 1.
[31] Jer. 9: 3.
[32] Jer. 9: 5.
[33] Jer. 1: 16.
[34] Jer. 5: 12.
[35] Jer. 5: 1.

the other nations that have been instrumental in Judah's fall; "O Jehovah, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. O Jehovah, correct me, but in measure; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing. Pour out thy wrath upon the nations that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on thy name; for they have devoured Jacob, yea, they have devoured him and consumed him, and have laid waste his habitation." [36] But the people themselves had gone too far in religious decay and social immorality to expect God to save the nation itself, so the prophet proceeds to write in advance the nation's epitaph: "*This is the nation that hath not hearkened to the voice of Jehovah their God, nor received instruction. Truth is perished, and is cut off from their mouth.*" [37]

TOPICS FOR REPORTS AND INVESTIGATION

1. Bible Teaching Concerning Slavery.
2. Jeremiah's Call and his Conception of it.
3. The Element of Hope in the Book of Jeremiah.
4. Baruch, the Scribe of Jeremiah, and his Work.
5. Jeremiah's Relations with the "Regular" Prophets

FURTHER READINGS

Kent's "The Kings and Prophets of Israel and Judah" ("The Historical Bible"), pp. 199-218; Mitchell's "Ethics of the Old Testament," Chap. XV, pp. 194-212; Bade's "The Old Testament in the Light of Today," Chap. IX, pp. 258-280; Sanders and Kent's "The Messages of the Earlier Prophets," pp. 229-295; Kirkpatrick's "The Doctrine of the Prophets," pp. 291-

[36] Jer. 10: 23-25. [37] Jer. 7: 28.

325; Cornill's "The Prophets of Israel," pp. 91-107; the two volumes ("The Expositor's Bible") by Ball, Chaps. I-XX and Bennett, Chaps. XXI-LII; Chambers' "The Hebrew Prophets," pp. 132-168; articles on Jeremiah in Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias.

CHAPTER XV

POLITICAL POLICIES OF JEREMIAH

The preceding study attempted to give emphasis to the social ethics of Jeremiah; the present study will attempt to analyze his political message as influenced by the larger social conditions of the times. While this division is somewhat arbitrary, it is convenient in a treatment of the prophet's teaching from this point of view. However, there is a sense in which there is justification for this division. Jeremiah's approach to the purely social problem was radically different from his mental reaction concerning political questions. His attitude toward social questions was that of a radical, while on all political questions he was a conservative. He manifested his willingness to obey the Lord in "rooting out, pulling down, and destroying," [1] if by doing so he could substitute social justice and religious purity for injustice and moral decay, but he was equally willing, in political affairs, to advise his people to "ask for the good old paths." [2] We may naturally ask: Is such a thing possible in practical life? Can a man be both a conservative and a radical at the same time? Possibly not in our day, when political action is the goal of social reform, but in the days of Jeremiah no such relationship existed.

[1] Jer. 1: 10. [2] Jer. 6: 16.

The political conservatism of Jeremiah was not that of stagnation or retrogression. He was not a man who revered an old thing merely because it was old. This would have been both narrow and stupid, and no true prophet could be either. His statesmanship was guided by vision and principle, and both of these led him to contend for established order and a tried-out public policy. The wisdom of this course is easy to see in the light of the discussion of political events of his time and of the consequences brought upon his nation by its failure to follow his political advice.

NATIONAL POLICIES

The national policies advocated by Jeremiah were opposed by both the ruling princes and popular prophets. It was inevitable that he should come in conflict with the state authorities and popular priests. Much of his public ministry was conducted in opposition to one or the other of these two classes, and sometimes his national policies ran counter to the wishes of both of these classes. This was true of the most fundamental principles advocated by the prophet.

In the eager years of youth, Jeremiah advocated a new nationalism that would reunite Israel and Judah. He hoped to see Jerusalem the capital of the nation as of old [3] and then, "Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I gave for an inheritance unto your fathers." [4] Out of the scattered population of Israel and the demoralized

[3] Jer. 3: 17. [4] Jer. 3: 18.

conditions in Judah, the prophet hoped to see welded together a nation that would be strong enough to withstand the invasions of Babylon and Egypt. His later foreign policy was forced upon him when he realized that his dream of national reorganization was impractical and futile.

POLICY TOWARD BABYLON

Jeremiah reveals a clear conception of a state policy in his earliest public utterances — a policy not only involving public welfare but national existence.[5] In chapter twenty-seven we have an outline of Jeremiah's political program, and an account of his contention with the princes and prophets of his day. He consistently contended that allegiance to Babylon was the imperative duty of Judah. The first public and outspoken announcement of this policy came in the fourth year of the reign of Zedekiah. At this time embassies were sent by the states of Palestine, which had for their purpose the forming of a coalition against Nebuchadnezzar. Jeremiah appeared while they were deliberating, bearing five yokes, one for each of the states represented, which included Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Sidon with the following message from Jehovah: "And it shall come to pass, that the nation and the kingdom which will not serve the same Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and that will not put their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, that nation will I punish with the sword, and with the famine, and with the pestilence, until I have consumed them by his hand."

It seems that this was the beginning of a series of

[5] Jer. 2: 14ff. Jer. 27: 8.

public debates between Jeremiah on one side, and certain popular prophets on the other. One such debate is recorded in chapter twenty-eight. In this instance Hananiah, one of these political prophets who was contending with Jeremiah, took a yoke which the true prophet was carrying around as a symbol, and broke it, saying, " Even so will I break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, within two full years from off the neck of all the nations." [6] Jeremiah's answer was simple and direct, " Thou hast broken the bars of wood; but thou hast made in their stead bars of Iron." [7] The verdict of the nations seems to have been made in Jeremiah's favor, for the deliberations came to naught, and no outbreak against Babylon followed.

But the work of the popular prophets did not end here, for about this time the exiles in Babylon were stirred up by this advocacy of rebellion by the popular prophets. This condition caused Jeremiah to write a letter [8] to the exiles in Babylon in which he condemned these prophets and pleaded with these exiled people to abide in peace and await the time of the Lord of restoration.

This, however, was not the end of this political agitation. For the next five years we hear no more of this great political question, but the whole matter was to come up again under rather remarkable conditions. It seems that Zedekiah came to believe sincerely in the political wisdom of Jeremiah, but at the same time the Jews who remained in Jerusalem were coming more and more to distrust his statecraft. At this crisis, Egypt tendered her aid to

[6] Jer. 29: 11. [7] Jer. 28: 13. [8] Jer. 29

Judah, and Zedekiah rebelled against Babylon. Immediately the Babylonian army invaded Judah and laid siege to Jerusalem. In this extremity, Zedekiah sent for the prophet for advice. The policy he had advocated through these years could not be gainsaid now. With the Babylonian army surrounding Jerusalem, he could not doubt his political wisdom, and he so informed the king. But the people would not believe him, and in the midst of the invasion the Egyptians appeared and Nebuchadnezzar raised the siege.

This was the last great crisis in the old prophet's life. Had his national policy, advocated through all these years, failed at the last, and had he been misleading his people? The joy of the Jewish people knew no bounds. But they paused long enough to brand the old prophet as a traitor, and to subject him to cruel indignities at the hands of the nobles and popular prophets. But even at this hour he did not waver; he knew that Jehovah had directed him, and he could abide the time of vindication with patience.

It was soon to come. Rejoicing and confidence were soon to give way to sorrow and despair. A year later (586 B. C.) Jerusalem fell, and Nebuchadnezzar determined to make his victory complete. The eyes of Zedekiah were put out by order of the Babylonian king, and he was then carried away captive to Babylon, but before his departure all his children were put to death. At last, through all the vicissitudes of fortune, the old prophet was destined to see realized the truth he had attempted to give his people for guidance, and it was his sorrow to see them reap the consequences of failure to follow it.

THEORY OF NATIONAL INDESTRUCTIBILITY

Another political doctrine held by Jeremiah was that Israel was indestructible. The consciousness of this fact, however, did not make it less necessary to advocate policies that would make this question unimportant. If the nation had followed his policy, there could have been no question about national continuity, but since they did not accept his political advice, the people themselves were destined finally to doubt that the nation could survive. In this state of mind he taught the Jewish people that exile and suffering were the afflictions sent upon them by Jehovah for their disobedience, and this judgment was not to result in permanent dissolution. "For I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have scattered thee, *but I will not make a full end of thee;* but I will correct thee in measure, and in no wise leave thee unpunished." [9]

The policies indicated above reveal in a way the principles of government advocated by Jeremiah, but we have his definite theory expressed in several places. (1) His first great doctrine was that rulers must execute judgment and righteousness.[10] The rights of the poor must be safeguarded, the foreigner must be dealt with justly, and the basic institutions must be secure from violence and debasement. (2) The private relations of men must be placed on a basis of social justice and fair dealing.[11] Every man must recognize the equal rights of other men in all the affairs of private life.

[9] Jer. 30: 11. [10] Jer. 22: 1-5. [11] Jer. 34: 6-11, 17.

JEREMIAH'S POLITICAL POLICIES REJECTED

A careful study of the Book of Jeremiah will show that all the political teachings of Jeremiah in the main were rejected by the princes and popular priests of Judah. The combined influence of these two classes was able to destroy the confidence of the people in Jeremiah, and to cause them to persecute him. The public ministry of the prophet was a life-long martyrdom. The temper of the public mind was such at this time that the people would not listen to wholesome advice, and in their desperate heedlessness they were angered when counseled to a wiser policy and better conduct.

Illustrations of the opposition of these classes are described here and there throughout the Book of Jeremiah. The feeling of the princes is well illustrated by the act of Jehoiakim, who ordered the writings of the prophet destroyed when they were read to him, and his anger was so great that he ordered the arrest of both Jeremiah, and Baruch the scribe.

Jeremiah was in almost constant conflict with the popular and temple priests during his entire ministry. The public utterances in the temple caused the temple priests to cast him into stocks [12] on the charge of profaning the temple court with unholy preachments. The opposition of the popular prophets was even more detrimental to social and political causes that he represented. They attempted to destroy the effectiveness of his message both in Judah and in Babylon. Jeremiah denounced them in no uncertain

[12] Jer. 20: 1, 2.

words in chapter twenty-three,[13] but the influence of these popular prophets could not be overcome, and they were successful in a large measure in neutralizing the effects of his public appeals and warnings. The persistence of the opposition of these prophets is illustrated by the work of Hananiah, who was a typical representative of this class.

But the worst was yet to come. Jeremiah's political wisdom was rewarded with the charge of treason, which resulted in his imprisonment. This came during the siege of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans. The prophet was accused of lending aid and sympathy to the enemies of Judah,[14] and he was cast into a dungeon to starve, while the military party clamored for his execution. The old prophet was only saved from his fate through the friendly offices of a foreigner who was in the confidence of the king.[15]

The climax of all the opposition came, however, when his neighbors of Anathoth deserted him, and even his own family declared he could not be trusted. We are told that his neighbors sought to murder him. "Let us destroy the tree with the fruit thereof, and let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name may be no more remembered"[16] is the way his neighbors expressed their attitude toward the prophet. At this time, when his old friends had deserted him, we would naturally expect his relatives to defend and stand by him, but they joined with others in denouncing Jeremiah: "But even thy brethren, and the house of thy father"[17] declared that he could not be trusted.

[13] Jer. 23: 9-32. [15] Jer. 38: 6-13. [17] Jer. 12: 6.
[14] Jer. 37: 13-21. [16] Jer. 11: 19.

Distrust, humiliation, persecution, and ingratitude were the rewards of the prophet for patriotic service, and it seems a terrible reward to be returned for unselfish devotion and loving-kindness. The life of Jeremiah illustrates the difficulty that confronts the reformer in his efforts to quicken the collective conscience of a nation. Nevertheless, his self-sacrifice was productive in giving to the world an example of devotion to right ideals and right conceptions of national life and political conduct. Professor Jordan wisely says of Jeremiah, "He teaches us the great lesson which mere politicians are prone to forget, that no nation, however great its privileges, can safely outrage the laws of truth and honesty."

TOPICS FOR REPORTS AND INVESTIGATION

1. The Political Teaching of the Popular Prophets of Judah.
2. Contrast and Comparison of the Political Policies of Isaiah and Jeremiah.
3. Relations of Zedekiah and Jeremiah.
4. Jeremiah's Preparation for Political Leadership.

FURTHER READINGS

Kent's "The Kings and Prophets of Israel and Judah" ("The Historical Bible"), pp. 236–246 and 279–292; Fowler's "The Prophets as Statesmen and Preachers," pp. 69–75; Jordan's "Prophetic Ideas and Ideals," pp. 163–190; Morgan's "Living Messages of the Books of the Bible" (Job to Malachi), pp. 109–127; Batten's "The Hebrew Prophet," Chap. X, pp. 239–257.

CHAPTER XVI

EZEKIEL

The changed conditions resulting from the Babylonian exile gradually developed a new type of prophet. The preëxilic prophets were called to minister to a nation with established institutions and growing social and political consciousness; the exilic prophets addressed a disorganized remnant who felt the oppressor's hand, and who were fast becoming a hopeless and irresponsible people. While the aims of the exilic prophets were not very different from those of their great predecessors, they addressed themselves to different conditions and laid emphasis on different matters. For instance, with the passing of political life, also passed the statesmanship of the prophets. We are not to see again such political leaders as Isaiah and Jeremiah. The mission of the prophet to an exiled people in despair called for a message that would stimulate to persistent endeavor and inspire with hope. The content of such a message could be found only in the glories of the Jewish people of the past, and in pointing to an ideal theocracy of the future.

With the beginning of the exile, we gradually recede from the teaching of social righteousness. Social justice will no longer be the central theme of the prophet of God. Amos and Micah are to have no

successors during the remainder of the prophetic period. The fall of the Hebrew state caused the moral leaders to direct their attention to the personal responsibility of the individual rather than to the collective conscience of the people.

While these later prophets were not great social or political leaders, we must not assume that they were relatively unimportant. They performed tasks that were unique and important to the world in which they lived, and they left a permanent heritage for future generations. "If the later prophets were not great statesmen nor social teachers nor original theologians, they were true to the prophetic ideals, and devoted themselves to the vital questions of their age. In so doing they attained their real greatness, and performed for their race and mankind an inestimable service." [1]

SKETCH OF EZEKIEL

Ezekiel was a contemporary of Jeremiah, but they were destined to prophesy under widely different conditions. Ezekiel ministered to the exiles in Babylon, while Jeremiah was giving his final counsel to his own people during the closing days at Jerusalem. Like Jeremiah, he seems to have been of the priestly line, a son of Busi,[2] but unlike Jeremiah, his younger contemporary, he was a married man, and one of his most solemn prophecies was in connection with his wife's death.[3] Ezekiel began to prophesy five years after he was carried a captive into Babylon in 592 B. C., and his public ministry was destined to continue for

[1] Sanders and Kent's "Messages of the Later Prophets," p. 4. [2] Ezek. 1: 3. [3] Ezek. 24: 14-18.

twenty-two years. Few of the details connected with his long ministry have come down to us.

CONDITION OF JEWISH EXILES

As a setting for the social message of the prophets of this period, it seems advisable to say a word about the conditions of the Jewish people while in Babylon. (1) The captives were not reduced to slavery. The intellectual and moral superiority of the Jewish captives over the native population made it easy for these foreigners to secure positions of responsibility and trust. Daniel became prime minister, and Nehemiah was selected to be the cupbearer to the Persian king. Many doubtless followed the advice of Jeremiah and resumed their former vocations of agriculture and gardening.[4] (2) Community life and interests were also somewhat conserved in Babylon, for lands were allotted to the exiles, and they were permitted to form settlements of their own. This enabled them to adopt some of the civil and religious forms of their native country. (3) Communication between Judea and the Jewish exiles was maintained without interference on the part of the native officials. In the preceding study, we found that Jeremiah sent messages to the exiles, and in turn we know that Ezekiel was well informed concerning the affairs at Jerusalem, and many of his prophecies were directed to those still remaining in the home land.[5]

But these Jewish exiles were far from being happy and contented. The popular literature of that period reflects their despondency.

[4] Jer. 29: 5, 28. [5] Ezek. 17: 11-22.

"By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion." [6]

We see in these words a people in utter despair. Another writer of this period voices this feeling as follows: "Zion is become a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation. Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised Thee, is burned with fire; and all our pleasant places are laid waste." [7] Their utter hopelessness is expressed by Ezekiel. "Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are clean cut off. How, then, can we live?" [8]

This briefly represents the social condition and mental attitude of these Jewish exiles, and to these Ezekiel was called upon to minister. It is easy to see that his supreme task was to lighten the burden of despair, but this task did not preclude at least a brief appeal to the social consciousness of the people. In fact, such an appeal was a necessity in the restoration of hope and ambition.

THE SOCIAL MESSAGE OF EZEKIEL

The social message is comprehended in his indictment of Jerusalem.[9] The earlier part of the book discusses the wickedness of the Holy City, and pronounces the impending doom that must follow such conduct. Unjust dealing, oppression of the stranger and the dependent, lewdness, extortion, and unfair business dealings are some of the social crimes charged up to the people of Jerusalem. Ezekiel follows this category with a specific charge against the classes responsible for this condition. He charges

[6] Ps. 137: 1.
[7] Isa. 64: 10-11.
[8] Ezek. 33: 10; 37: 11.
[9] Ezek. 22: 1-12.

the popular prophets with a conspiracy to practice injustice; [10] the priests are guilty of profanation,[11] the princes have shed innocent blood for dishonest gain,[12] and the "people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery; yea, they have vexed the poor and needy, and have oppressed the sojourner wrongfully." [13] All this sounds like the indictments of Jeremiah, and it may be that Ezekiel was giving emphasis to familiar messages of his older and more experienced contemporary.

Cornill thinks that Ezekiel gave greater emphasis to the sin of unchastity than any of his predecessors. "If the sanctification of wedded life and the purity of the family has ranked at all times as the costliest ornament and noblest treasure of the Jewish race, it is a possession in which we cannot fail to recognize, more than any other, the seal which Ezekiel lastingly imprinted upon it." [14]

Ezekiel's most emphatic message to the Jewish exiles was directed to their personal relations. Every man should recognize every other as a brother, and all their relations should be based on the principle of brotherly love. This was the spiritual bond that was to hold these little scattered bands of exiles together in this foreign land.

The preëxilic prophets established a collective ethical code. The Hebrews had been taught to think of themselves collectively; the individual had been absorbed in the nation, the tribe, and the family. But under the conditions of exile responsibility became

[10] Ezek. *22*: 25.
[11] Ezek. *22*: 26.
[12] Ezek. *22*: 27.
[13] Ezek. *22*: 29.
[14] "The Prophets of Israel," p. 121.

personal. We are not surprised, then, to find that Ezekiel attempted to determine the personal practices of a just man. These may be arranged in a decalogue of positive and negative terms as follows:

(1) "Restoreth to the debtor his pledge."

(2) "Hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment."

(3) "Hath withdrawn his hand from iniquity."

(4) "Hath executed true justice between man and man."

(5) "Hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel."

(6) "Hath not defiled his neighbor's wife."

(7) "Hath not come near to a woman in her impurity."

(8) "Hath not oppressed any."

(9) "Hath not taken ought by robbery."

(10) "Hath not given forth upon interest, neither hath taken any increase." [15]

The comment of the prophet on the keeper of this code is that "*he is just, and he shall surely live.*"

A comment or two will be all that is necessary to present this code in its true light. (1) Pledge for debt was authorized by early legal sanction [16] provided the garment is returned to the owner before nightfall. The prophet recognizes the ancient law on this subject in several places,[17] but in one instance the just man is represented as one who "hath not taken ought to pledge." [18] It would appear that Ezekiel was endeavoring to abolish the practice under

[15] Ezek. 18:5-9.
[16] Exod. 22:26f.
[17] Ezek. 18:7; 12; 33:15.
[18] Ezek. 18:16.

these new conditions. (2) Ezekiel takes advanced ground also in regard to loans. It had long been a Semitic law that no interest was to be exacted of a poor Israelite whose distress had compelled him to borrow. "If thou lend money to any of my people with thee that is poor, thou shall not be to him as a creditor." [19] It is easy to see that under this law lending was a charity, and not a means of promoting industry. A passage in Leviticus bears out this idea. "If thy brother be waxed poor thou shalt uphold him. Take thou of him no interest ["*neshet*"] or increase ["*tarbit*"], but fear thy God, that thy brother may live with thee." [20] But this law did not apply to foreigners.[21] Schaeffer,[22] in justification of this law, says: "Aliens temporarily or even permanently located on Israelitish soil for the purpose of gaining a livelihood, who fail to identify themselves with the country in which they live, cannot claim the rights and privileges of a full-fledged citizen." Ezekiel made no reference to this distinction. It would appear that he would include foreigners in the application of the law. The fact is, the prophet was attempting to readjust the legal system of Judah to the new conditions in exile.

The most important and characteristic message of Ezekiel was concerned with the personal responsibility of every man for his own acts. It was a common conviction that the calamities that had come upon the Jewish people were an inheritance which they could not avert. These exiles were very familiar with the proverb: "The fathers have eaten sour grapes and

[19] Ex. 22: 25. [20] Ezek. 25: 33, 36. [21] Deut. 23: 20.
[22] "The Social Legislation of the Primitive Semites," p. 114.

the children's teeth are set on edge." [23] This proverb was used to support the old Jewish doctrine of retribution that the sons were the victims of the fathers' sins, and the victims were helpless to remedy the conditions which were determined by their ancestors. The eighteenth chapter is a refutation of this doctrine. Ezekiel here elaborates the truth that if a man lives an upright life, observing his social and religious duty, he shall live regardless of the life lived by his father. On the other hand, if he disregards the moral law, and disobeys the will of God, he alone must suffer the consequences of his misdeeds. This truth was dimly seen by Jeremiah, but we are indebted to Ezekiel for bringing it into bold relief. This timely and wholesome doctrine must have been an important factor in restoring faith and hope in the lives of these disconsolate exiles. They were here taught in no uncertain words that they had it within their power to determine their own future.

TOPICS FOR REPORTS AND INVESTIGATION

1. Symbolic Teaching of Ezekiel.
2. Ezekiel in Comparison and Contrast with his Predecessors.
3. Ezekiel's Teaching of Jewish Restoration.
4. Religious Importance of the Jewish Exile.
5. Ezekiel's Individualism.

FURTHER READINGS

Mitchell's "Ethics of the Old Testament," Chap. XVII, pp. 218-233; Kent's "Makers and Teachers of Judaism" ("Historical Bible"), pp. 12-34; Cornill's "Prophets of Israel," pp. 115-124; Kirkpatrick's "The

[23] Ezek. 18:2.

Doctrine of the Prophets," pp. 326–350; Sanders and Kent's "The Messages of the Later Prophets," pp. 19-31; Wallis' "Sociological Study of the Bible," Chap. XX; articles on Ezekiel in Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias.

CHAPTER XVII

OBADIAH

The book of Obadiah is the shortest in the Old Testament. It consists of only twenty-one verses, but the prophet's vision is clear and the message is presented with force and directness.

AUTHORSHIP

Nothing is known of the author of this book. There are twelve Obadiahs mentioned in the Bible, but it has been impossible to identify any of them with this prophecy. We are justified by the contents in assuming that the author was a native of Judah. The period in which he lived and the date of this message are matters of serious doubt. G. A. Smith says, "The little book has been tossed out of one century into another by successive critics, till there exists in their estimates of its date a difference of nearly six hundred years." From the references in verses eleven to fourteen, it seems probable that the author of the book wrote soon after Jerusalem was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, which would be not far from 586 B. C. This would make this prophet a contemporary of Jeremiah.[1] To the casual reader, the book is little more than an expression of protest against Edom for rejoicing over the humiliation of Judah because of her fall at the hands of the Chal-

[1] See Keil and Delitzsch, Vol. I, pp. 337–345, on the question of the date of authorship.

deans, but the serious Bible student will find a deeper meaning in this prophecy if he will seek the permanent values in the book.

EDOM'S CONFLICT WITH JUDAH

Edom was located south of the Dead Sea, and in the main it may be characterized as a mountainous country, although the borders of the country both east and west were less rugged, and bore luxuriant growths of plant and vegetable life.

The conflict of the Edomites and Israelites was of long standing. Edom traced its origin back to Esau, and Israel to Jacob. The first reference to the antagonism between them occurs in Genesis in the striking passage: "The children struggled together within her." The larger significance of this passage was revealed by Jehovah to Rebekah in the following words: "Two nations are in the womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the older shall serve the younger." [2] The history of Edom and Israel is the unfolding of the "two manner of people" that issued from Rebekah. History reveals several incidents that illustrate the antipathy between the offspring of Esau and Jacob. The Israelites were refused permission to go through Edom on their way to the promised land,[3] which compelled them to go around this country.[4] This insult was not forgotten by the Israelites, and when Saul was made king he declared war upon the Edomites.[5] During the reign of David

[2] Gen. 25: 22, 23.
[3] Num. 20: 14-17.
[4] Num. 20: 21.
[5] Sam. 14: 47.

they were brought into complete subjection to Judah.[6] They remained subject to Jewish power until the reign of Jehoram, when they revolted and set up a kingdom of their own.[7] The relations of the two countries were destined to remain hostile for all future time. Fifty years after the Edomite revolution we find Amaziah making a determined attempt to reconquer the country,[8] but he was only partially successful. The conflict of Judah with the northern powers, a little later on, made it impossible for her to direct attention to Edom, and this country remained independent and undisturbed.[9] It was but natural for Edom to join in the siege and conquest of Jerusalem when the final struggle of Judah against Nebuchadnezzar came. This was the culmination of the antagonism between the two countries, and the prophecy of Obadiah [10] doubtless voices the general feeling of his countrymen toward their ancient enemy.

THE MESSAGE OF OBADIAH

Obadiah combines the spirit of the messages of both Nahum and Zephaniah. He, like Nahum, indicts a sinful and erring foe; and, like Zephaniah, pronounces judgment upon them for their misdeeds.

The sin of this nation is that of *wicked satisfaction in the disaster that befell Judah;* the willingness of the nation to share in the plunder of the city of Jerusalem; and in helping to prevent the escape of the Jewish fugitives.[11]

[6] I Kings 11:15 ff. [7] I Kings 8:20-22. [8] I Kings 14:7.

[9] The historical relations of Edom and Judah are well summarized in the Schaff-Herzog "Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge" in the article on Edom.

[10] Obad. 1:10-16. [11] Obad. 1:10-14.

Obadiah declared that judgment will surely come upon all heathen nations, and Edom shall not escape. "As thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee; thy dealing shall return upon thine own head." [12] The remnant of Jehovah's people will remain, and finally the combined forces of Judah and Israel will repossess their own land, and Edom, as well as other lands, will be again after all these years brought into subjection to Judah, and her kingdom will be securely established.[13]

The source of the sin of Edom is traced to boastful pride. "The pride of thy heart has deceived thee, O thou that dwelleth in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high, that saith in thy heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground!" The rocky fastnesses and declivitous heights gave seclusion and security to these people. In such a geographical position they could look upon defenseless Judah with scorn and indifference. They had even looked upon the suffering of the Jewish people with satisfaction, and finally had contributed to it.

But the prophet tells us, "The pride of thy heart has deceived thee." The nation had lost its perspective. This is always the effect of false pride. National security appeared more substantial than physical conditions justified. Pride of heart makes deception easy. "The men that were at peace with thee have deceived thee and prevailed against thee." [14] The wise man is made ineffective by false pride, and his understanding is blurred. "Shall I not in that day," says Jehovah, "destroy the wise men out of Edom and understanding out of the mount of Esau?

[12] Obad. 1:15. [13] Obad. 1:15-21. [14] Obad. 1:7.

And thy mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed, to the end that every one may be cut off from the mount of Esau by slaughter." [15]

Edom epitomizes all past nations of history in the steps downward toward destruction. Deceptive pride obscures national and personal immorality. Statesmen are deceived into believing in false economies and international policies. National dangers are unseen until too near to forestall. The admonition of Obadiah is as applicable to the nation whose pride is in vast domains and limitless resources, or great fleets and insular possessions, or national efficiency and "*kultur*" as in the apparent security of impregnable clefts of the mountains. The inevitable consequence of such false pride is always some form of injustice. Retribution comes sooner or later to the nation that falls a victim to it.

With this brief summary we might ask: Did Obadiah have a social message? The answer is simple in so far as any conscious social aim is concerned. The prophet had no social program. His social message is in his assumption of a normal social order, and his terrific attack on a nation that failed to maintain it. The prophet's protest and prediction of judgment reflect a statesman's discernment, and the fact that the prophecy of judgment was later to be fulfilled reveals a mind capable of forecasting the consequences of a national policy. But aside from this we do no violence to the implication of the prophecy in recalling that the amalgamation of ethnic groups depends on the establishment of common sympathies and beliefs, as well as the character

[15] Obad. 1:8, 9.

and resources of their environment. Toleration must always precede coöperation. Mutual aid against a common foe is often the first step in the coöperative process, and this always accelerates the process of toleration. The progress in the consciousness of freedom and unity must come up through these steps — mutual aid, toleration, and coöperation.[16] This process could not be established between Judah and Edom, or between Judah and the other neighboring nations. Therefore, eternal conflict and destruction, as well as rapidly shifting supremacy, marked the progress of western oriental history. This is the social but unconscious message that is reflected from the brief vision of Obadiah.

TOPICS FOR REPORTS AND INVESTIGATION

1. A Study of Jewish Prophecy against Foreign Nations.
2. Sources of Obadiah's Prophecy against Edom.
3. A Study of the Various Dates of Authorship assigned to the Book of Obadiah.
4. Significance of the Meaning and Contrast of "Mount of Esau" and "Mount Zion."
5. Comparison of the Book of Obadiah with the One Hundred and Thirty-seventh Psalm.

FURTHER READINGS

G. C. Morgan's "Living Messages of the Books of the Bible" (Job to Malachi), pp. 213–225; Kirkpatrick's "The Doctrine of the Prophets," pp. 33-45; G. A. Smith's "Twelve Prophets" ("Expositor's Bible"), Vol. II, pp. 163-184; Sanders and Kent's "The Messages of the Later Prophets," pp. 63-69; articles on Obadiah in Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias.

[16] See Giddings' "The Principles of Sociology," pp. 299-360.

CHAPTER XVIII

"SECOND ISAIAH"

In the two earlier studies on the book of Isaiah the last twenty-seven chapters were left for later consideration, because it is now the prevailing opinion among biblical scholars that these chapters were not composed by Isaiah the son of Amoz, but by a writer who lived at least a century and a half later, and whose name we do not know. Because these prophecies were attached as a kind of appendix to the Book of Isaiah, this unknown author has been variously designated as "*The Second Isaiah*," "*Deutero-Isaiah*," or merely "*The Unknown Prophet of the Exile*." This theory is maintained on the ground of contrast in style, vocabulary, and thought, and in the complete change of viewpoint of the author. The earlier prophecies were addressed to a people with a national consciousness. The appeal is made to a people on their own soil, and the message is directed to the social conscience of the nation, to meet the responsibility of social justice and patriotic conduct. But the point of view of the prophecies now under consideration is far different. They are directed to a people wholly in exile, with limited social responsibility, and little or no civic consciousness. The former prophecies were directed to a nation proud of their king, their courts of justice, and

their temple, while the latter prophecies were directed to a people with broken pride, vanquished hopes, and modified ideals. The two messages are regarded as too well adapted to the purposes and the needs of these respective conditions to have been written by the same author or to the same people in the same age. Cornill [1] says, "It is now generally admitted, and may be regarded as one of the best established results of Old Testament research, that the portion of our present Book of Isaiah which embraces chapters forty to sixty-six, did not emanate from the prophet Isaiah known to us, but is the work of an unknown prophet of the period towards the end of the Babylonian captivity."

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The seventy years of exile were drawing to a close when these prophecies were spoken, and many changes had been experienced by the Jewish captives during this period. Nebuchadnezzar had died in B. C. 561, and the twenty years that followed were years of revolt and anarchy throughout the Babylonian Empire. Finally, in 553 B. C, Nabonidos, a general in the army, usurped the throne, and immediately took steps to stamp out the popular religions which had been planted on Babylonian soil through the conquests and captivities of Nebuchadnezzar. The religion of the Jews was one of the most persistent and popular religions of the empire, and their persecution was among the first to begin. Previously to this time their religion and their customs had been officially tolerated, although held in contempt by the

[1] "The Prophets of Israel," p. 131.

populace. Many Jews had acquired the spirit of commerce, and some had amassed large fortunes. Others had offices of trust and responsibility committed to them. Now, however, in common with other alien people, their religious practices were forbidden, and restrictions were placed on their commercial enterprises.

Nabonidos had not advanced far in his reign when he came in contact with a military leader who was destined after a few years, to overthrow his empire and restore the Jewish exiles to their former land. This was Cyrus, king of Elam, a mighty prince and warrior. His first aggressive plans were revealed when Astyages, king of the Medes, revolted and planned to make an attack on Babylonia, to whom they were subject. Their purpose was unexpectedly frustrated by the young king, Cyrus, who marched against the Median army, defeated them in a sharp and decisive battle, and made their king his captive. Nabonidos was pleased with this turn of affairs at first, but when, two years later, Cyrus conquered Persia and added her territory to his dominions, he was alarmed. He had reason to be alarmed, for his persecution of the alien races in his kingdom had made them restless and disloyal. Many of them were, like the Jews, captives who had been forcibly taken from their native lands, and they welcomed any political change that might offer an opportunity for them to return. All of these people were interested in the career of this young king of Elam, but none more than the Jews, for this great unknown prophet of the exile had spoken of Cyrus as "God's shepherd," who should free these exiles and permit them

to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple.[2] It was at this time, when Babylonia was on the eve of falling a victim to the ambitious conquests of Cyrus, that the prophecies here under consideration were spoken.

THE SOCIAL SITUATION

During the historical and political changes that took place during the latter part of the exile there were also important social changes taking place among these Jewish exiles. It is important and necessary to know as much as possible of these conditions in order to understand the prophecy of "Second Isaiah."

The number of Jews had greatly multiplied by the close of the exilic period. Not more than forty thousand went into exile, but forty-two thousand returned, and a large number still remained in their new homes. The old social organization of the family and the clan survived, and social distinctions were still respected. Many families had acquired riches. These contributed largely to the pilgrimages, and to the restoration of the temple. The rich still held slaves.

Perhaps the wealthy classes were numbered among the exiles of 598 B. C. rather than among those of 589 B. C. The captives of the first exile were composed of the better class of the nation, and, as we have seen, enjoyed liberal privileges and opportunities. They remained in community groups with their own political and religious organizations. But the conditions of the captives of the second exile were

[2] Isa. 44:28.

different. The destruction of their personal effects in the flames that destroyed their city, their famished condition during the siege, and the days of prolonged marching, left these exiles impoverished and incapacitated for vigorous labor on their arrival in Babylonia. Of these exiles the prophet says: "But this is a people robbed and plundered; they are all of them snared in holes, and they are hid in prison houses; they are for a prey, and none delivereth; for a spoil, and none saith, Restore." [3] Some of these were reduced to slavery, and others were used by Nebuchadnezzar in the construction of public buildings.

What influence the Jews of the first exile had in alleviating the suffering of their less fortunate brethren is not revealed in the historical records. The threatened persecutions resulting from changing administrations perhaps intimidated them into helpless inaction. There were periods when the older and well-established families may have been able to render assistance to those of their number who were experiencing undue hardships, but the large place given by the prophet of this period to the hope of deliverance leads to the conclusion that little relief had come to lighten their burdens.

THE MESSAGE OF DELIVERANCE

In the midst of these political turmoils and social degradations, the voice of this unknown prophet of deliverance was raised to encourage his people, and to assure them that freedom and larger service were to come to them. The chapters into which the

[3] Isa. 42: 22, cf. 47: 6.

prophecy is divided, with few exceptions, are in chronological order, and the unity of content enables us to assume that the production is probably the deliverance of a single prophet.

Some have declared that "Second" or "Deutero-Isaiah" must be accounted the most brilliant jewel of prophetic literature. "In him," says Cornill, "are gathered together, as in a focus, all the great and noble meditations of the prophecy which preceded him, and he reflects them with the most gorgeous refraction and with the most bounteous play of light and color." [4] The fundamental theme and the keynote of his message is found in the very first words that he utters. They are very familiar to every lover of music, for they also form the first words of Handel's "Messiah," whose solemn strains give us a deeper realization of the truth of Cornill's estimate of this prophetic utterance.

"*Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem and cry unto her that her day of trial is accomplished and that her iniquity is pardoned; for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins.*" [5]

The political deliverance of Israel is repeatedly proclaimed, and Cyrus is declared to be the instrument in God's hand to accomplish this end. The prophet stimulates the aspirations of the people and arouses their hopes of immediate deliverance by reminding these exiles of the wonderful victories of this new military leader who has appeared out of the east. "Who has raised up one from the east, whom He calleth in righteousness to His foot? He giveth na-

[4] Ib. p. 132. [5] Isa. 40:1, 2.

tions before him, and maketh him rule over kings; He giveth them as dust to his sword, as the driven stubble to his bow." [6] The prophet even more plainly tells his people that Cyrus will release them from their captivity, and will aid them in the rebuilding of the holy city. "I have raised him [Cyrus] up in righteousness, and I will make straight all his ways; he shall build my city, and he shall let my exiles go free."

Never had a prophecy been more definite than this of the great prophet of the exile, and never was fulfillment more direct and complete. With the quick precision peculiar to Cyrus, he overthrew the kingdom of Babylon, and on the third of November, B. C. 538, he made his triumphal entry into the capital city. Thus the great empire built up by the genius of Nebuchadnezzar came to an end, and world affairs in the east took a new direction.

THE MESSAGE OF SOCIAL RIGHTEOUSNESS

The possibilities of early deliverance directed attention again to the social conditions that resulted in national disorganization and political exile. The near approach of restoration demanded the awakening of the civic conscience. These exiles could not assume political responsibility without a clear realization that their exile was the direct consequence of their practices of social injustice and political corruption. So the prophet assures them, "Jehovah's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear." [7] Social crimes are, however, responsible for their separation

6 Isa. 41:2. 7 Isa. 59:1.

from God. "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, so He will not hear." [8]

Then follows the summary of social wrongs that had separated the people from God, and that had supplied the cause for the delay of deliverance. The list of offenses implies the existence of a social order and the presence at least of some of the institutions of civil society. Courts existed, but the prophet tells us, "None sueth in righteousness and none pleadeth in truth. They trust in vanity, and speak lies." [9] The civic conscience of the people needed to be aroused to a sense of justice and human sympathy. They needed "to loose the bonds of wickedness — to let the oppressed go free." What is the real spirit of philanthropy? "Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry," says the prophet, "and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? When thou seest the naked, that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?" [10] This represents the real spirit of service. Until this attitude of mind is attained, progress toward restoration must be slow. On the other hand, large promise is held out to this exiled people if they respond to this ideal.

"If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking wickedly, and if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul, then shall thy light rise in darkness, and thine obscurity be as the noonday; and Jehovah will guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in dry places, and make strong thy

[8] Isa. 59:2. [9] Isa. 59:4. [10] Isa. 58:7, 8.

bones, and thou shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not. And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places; thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations, and thou shalt be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of paths to dwell in." [11]

No prophet of Judah has held out the promise of such large reward for social service as does this unknown prophet of the exile. Perhaps the reason is to be found in the larger social need that circumstances had thrust upon this people. More depended upon coöperative effort than in any previous epoch. When institutional restraints are weakest, moral and social control needs to be the strongest. Unhappily this is not usually the case, and the prophet's strong appeal must have been a mighty factor in the maintenance of social justice.

The time had now come for the fulfillment of the promise of the prophet. Within a few months after the conquest of Babylon, Cyrus issued an edict [12] which granted to the Jewish exiles permission to return to Jerusalem, and in the spring of 537 B. C. they actually began the journey. With this great event another epoch in the history of the Hebrews came to a close, and the prophecy of the future was to deal on the social side with new problems, where the social element was to be more completely submerged in the religious changes of the times.

TOPICS FOR REPORTS AND INVESTIGATION

1. Contributions to History Found in "Second Isaiah."

[11] Isa. 58: 10-12. [12] Ezra 1.

2. The Prophet's Conception of Cyrus.
3. The Theology of Second Isaiah.
4. The Prophet's Conception of the "Servant of Jehovah."
5. Influence of the Exile on Prophecy.

FURTHER READINGS

Cornill's "The Prophets of Israel," pp. 131-144; Kirkpatrick's "The Doctrine of the Prophets," pp. 353-410; G. A. Smith's "Isaiah," XL-LXVI ("Expositor's Bible"); Sanders and Kent's "The Messages of the Later Prophets," pp. 149-193; Chamberlain's "The Hebrew Prophets," pp. 188-214; Jordan's "Prophetic Ideas and Ideals," pp. 233-273.

CHAPTER XIX

HAGGAI

We now enter upon a new period in the history of Jewish prophecy — that of the restoration. The era is best known through the work of two prophets — Haggai and Zechariah — whose chief mission was to encourage the rebuilding of the temple and to revive the national spirit among the Jewish colonists.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The conditions that justified divine interference at this time may be briefly stated as follows: Our previous study related the circumstances which resulted in the decree of Cyrus granting permission to the exiled Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple. This decree was issued in 536 B. C., but we cannot be certain that an immediate return was begun by any considerable number of these exiled Jews. Undoubtedly the majority of this expatriated people preferred to remain in the land where adversity had cast them, for at this time many of them had built homes, acquired property, and some had risen to positions of honor and preferment in governmental affairs. Finally, under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Joshua, the high priest, 42,360 men with their families and a large number of slaves began the journey back to Judea. After many hardships and some delays they reached their

destination. A hearty welcome awaited them from the Jews who had been living in their native land, and after about one year active plans were undertaken for the rebuilding of the temple.

In the meantime, important changes had occurred in the kingdom of Persia. Cyrus had been succeeded by Cambyses, who had added Egypt to the great Asiatic possessions of his predecessor, but on account of his tyranny and cruelty his dependencies began to rise in rebellion, and a usurper, who claimed to be the brother of Cambyses, seized the throne. The king marched against this pretender, but before they met in battle Cambyses committed suicide. Magus Gaumata, the pretender, ruled for about one year before he was put to death by Darius, who then ascended the Persian throne. This occurred in 521 B. C., and the two years that followed were years of revolt and rebellion in the Persian kingdom. In the midst of these troublous times, Darius made Zerubbabel viceroy of Judea. Possibly this was a stroke of diplomacy on the part of Darius to win the support of the Jews. Whatever the motive, it gave the Jews release from the anxiety of external interference and opportunity to carry out the plans for which they had returned to Jerusalem.

SKETCH OF HAGGAI

We seek in vain for any historic record of the personal incidents in the life of this prophet. Both history and tradition are silent concerning him, and we are compelled to rely on the allusions found in his brief prophecy and in the fifth and sixth chapters of Ezra for the name and the place of the man in his-

tory. It is a very general conjecture that Haggai began prophesying very late in life because of his reference to the first temple,[1] which has led some to believe that he had seen the temple before the exile, but this has been questioned by some and denied altogether by other biblical scholars. G. A. Smith says, "We are quite ignorant of his [Haggai's] age at the time the word of Jehovah came to him"; and Sanders and Kent declare, "There is no evidence to support the late Jewish tradition to the effect that he was an old man when he delivered his prophecy."[2] Some have assumed that Haggai was not of the priestly class, because of his appeal to the priests for an official decision[3] instead of making a formal and direct deliverance on his own authority. The period of Haggai's public ministry was brief, probably not extending over four months, from September to December in the year 520 B. C. However, its importance cannot be determined by its length, for he appeared at a very critical period and he wrought mightily during his public ministry.

THE MESSAGE OF HAGGAI

But there were difficulties that now confronted the Jews other than royal interference. They had delayed the real beginning of the house of Jehovah and the time had been consumed in building "*ceiled houses*" of their own. They had become extravagant and selfish in their own possessions. "Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink;

[1] Hag. 2:3.
[2] "Messages of the Later Prophets," p. 204.
[3] Hag. 2:11-13.

ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes." [4]

These conditions brought forth a new prophet, who called himself by a new prophetic title, "The Lord's Messenger." He came with a direct question upon his lips, which he addressed to the rulers and the people: "Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your ceiled houses, while this house lieth waste?" [5] But the people had a quick and ready answer to the prophet's question, which answer sought to direct attention to the times rather than to luxury and extravagance. They reminded the prophet that drouth had destroyed their crops and poverty had threatened them, therefore they were unable to build Jehovah's house. Haggai had an answer for this too, and his answer was in the form of a remedy. God controls the rain. Obey God by restoring His house and see what He will do in response to obedience to Him. They could not refuse to try the plan suggested. In three weeks' time, encouraged by the assurance of the prophet, the work of rebuilding began.

Success, however, was not to come without trials and discouragement. As the work progressed, the people saw that the new temple was to be inferior to the one erected by Solomon. They were ready to give up and return to the ease and comforts of their homes, but again the prophet arouses their enthusiasm with a vivid description of the glory that Jehovah will bring to it in future days. That the glory of this house will be greater than the glory of its

[4] Hag. 1:6. [5] Hag. 1:4.

predecessor [6] is the thought that stimulates the people to continue their work. At the end of two months the prophet discerns that they again need an encouraging word. He changes his method now from that of the glowing word picture of future triumph to that of logic and social policy. He uses the principle of ceremonial uncleanness to show that the temple has a vital relation to the purity and sobriety of the people. Later on the same day, he takes up the argument anew, and arouses the hopes of the builders to the possible restoration of the Davidic line through its present representative, Zerubbabel, who was directing the work of rebuilding the temple.

With these words of hopeful restoration of the kingdom of Judea, the voice of Haggai becomes silent, but he had fulfilled his mission. For four years the work of rebuilding the temple went on until its final completion.

The larger meaning of this prophecy is admirably set forth by G. Campbell Morgan [7] in presenting the permanent values of the book.

"The permanent value of this book is twofold. First, it is a revelation of the peculiar perils of an age of adversity; and, secondly, it is a declaration of the duty of the man of faith in such an age. Haggai helps us to see the perils of the hour when everything looks dark; and to understand the duty of the man of faith in such an hour, and in the presence of such perils.

"There are four perils indicated in the prophecy, and the four addresses deal with them respectively.

6 Hag. 2:9.

7 "Living Messages of the Books of the Bible," p. 305.

First, the peril of a false content. Secondly, the peril of a false discontent. Thirdly, the peril of a false expectation. Finally, the peril of a false fear.

"First, a false content. As these people looked at the conditions in the midst of which they found themselves they said, 'It is not the time . . . for the Lord's house to be built.'

"Secondly, a false discontent. After the work had commenced they looked at their building in the light of the olden days, and they said, 'Who is left among you that saw this house in its former glory? And how do ye see it now? Is it not in your eyes as nothing?'

"Thirdly, a false expectation. When the building had proceeded further they expected immediate material results from their moral reformation.

"Finally, a false fear. They were filled with fear of the nations by whom they were surrounded."

But their fears were groundless, for the temple of the restoration was not to be the center of a temporal kingdom, and that was not the hope that Haggai held out to his people. Instead of founding a kingdom they were to establish a church, and instead of the reign being temporal, it was destined to be spiritual. The temporal glory of the Jewish nation had passed, but a glory more transcendent and universal was about to take its place. Haggai and his brief message gain tremendously in importance when we think of him in relation to this beginning.

He was also connected with a new national name of great social significance. This prophet represented a race that has been known by three names — Hebrews, Israelites, and Jews. These names are not

synonymous. Each is importantly connected with biography, geography, and history. Hebrew refers to the descendants of Abraham, Israelite refers to a native of Israel, and Jew is connected with the sons of Judah. In time the latter term succeeded the other two, and this people became known as Jews. Haggai did not encourage a new nationalism. The Israelite was no longer to be thought of in terms of geographical boundaries. Hebraism is now to be merged into Judaism. The Jews had lost a temporal kingdom, but they had gained a spiritual empire.

TOPICS FOR REPORTS AND INVESTIGATION

1. The Importance of Haggai's Message.
2. The Method and Result of Haggai's Work.
3. The Importance of the Rebuilding of the Temple.
4. A Study of Jewish Leaders during the Days of Haggai.
5. The Beginning of the Church.

FURTHER READINGS

Marcus Dods' "Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi," pp. 44–58; G. C. Morgan's "Living Messages of the Books of the Bible" (Job to Malachi), pp. 303-315; Petrie's "Israel's Prophets," pp. 202–213; Sanders and Kent's "Messages of the Later Prophets," pp. 197-212; Kirkpatrick's "The Doctrine of the Prophets," pp. 413-422; also see Haggai in encyclopedias and Bible dictionaries.

CHAPTER XX

ZECHARIAH

The public ministry of Zechariah was in part contemporaneous with that of Haggai. His first prophecies were delivered soon after the first promises had been made by Haggai to the discouraged builders. The date of his second message seems to have been about two months after the close of Haggai's ministry, while his public utterances are dated during the close of the second year's work in rebuilding the temple. The date and authorship of the last five chapters have been seriously questioned by biblical scholars. There is a tendency to doubt that Zechariah wrote these chapters, and some contend that they are of preëxilian origin, while others, with equal force, contend that they were written during post-exilian times. Perhaps the safest conclusion is that of Marcus Dods, who says that these last chapters were anonymous. Dods agrees with Canon Perowne that as to the date of authorship "it is not easy to say which way the weight of evidence preponderates."

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The history of the times, in so far as they have any bearing on this prophet's message, has been briefly outlined in the preceding study of Haggai. The beginning of his prophecy is definitely indicated

by these words: "In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius." [1] For all the eight visions there is assigned one date, i.e., "in the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month, the month Shebat, in the second year of Darius," [2] which fixes the date during the winter of 520 and 519 B. C. The prophecies of both Haggai and Zechariah grew out of the same conditions, and both centered around the rebuilding of the temple, but Zechariah's vision of the angelic horseman, which symbolized existing peace, seems to be in conflict with the prediction of Haggai that Jehovah would bring upon the nations a destructive war. As the exact date of the realization of the vision is undetermined, however, the conflict may be more imaginary than real.

The appearance of these two men at the same time and with messages directed at the same conditions is significant because of the way in which they supplement each other. One was a priest, the other a layman. Zechariah's symbolic visions were in marked contrast with the direct, matter-of-fact deliverances of Haggai. Both had a place in the work of encouraging their countrymen in the task of rebuilding the temple, and again arousing the people to spiritual consciousness.

SKETCH OF ZECHARIAH

This prophet, like Jeremiah and Ezekiel, but unlike Haggai, his contemporary, was of priestly origin, being a son of Berechiah, and grandson of Iddo,[3] the latter being one of the most important priests that returned from exile with Zerubbabel and Joshua.[4]

[1] Hag. 1:1.
[2] Hag. 1:7.
[3] Zech. 1:1, 7.
[4] Neh. 12:4.

The fact that Zechariah succeeded his grandfather as priest under the high priest Jehoiakim,[5] has led to the inference that his father died young. This inference is further supported by the passage in Ezra where Zechariah is referred to as the "son of Iddo" instead of his grandson,[6] the name of the father having been passed over because he had died before he attained the priesthood through the death of Iddo, his own father.

Zechariah was doubtless born in exile, and his name, meaning "Jehovah's memorial," tells the simple history of the faith of his pious family who were relying on the promises of Jehovah to fulfil his promise to his exiled people, who in their sorrow were able to look beyond to the promised restoration. The return of the youth to Jerusalem gave promise that he was destined to fulfill in reality what his name had symbolized when he was born in exile.

Zechariah combines in his personality the attributes of the dreamer, the reformer, and the seer; and his threefold personality is so clearly reflected in his writings as to bring into doubt the integrity of the authorship of his book. His diversity of style reminds us of Ezekiel. He seems to have been influenced in his social conceptions by the prophets of the eighth century, he approaches Daniel in apocalyptic vision, and in his clear portraiture of the coming Messiah he rivals the great Isaiah. Only in one of these aspects will this prophet be studied, that is, as a reformer who adapted his messages to his times.

[5] Neh. 12:16. [6] Ezra 5:1.

THE SOCIAL MESSAGE OF ZECHARIAH

Zechariah begins his prophecy by directing his people to vital questions which concerned the community interests. He shows his knowledge of the preëxilic prophets by frequent quotation. He does not refer to these prophets by specific name, but refers to them as the " former prophets," and his social message reminds us of the early teaching of such prophets as Amos and Isaiah.

His greatest opportunity came when a deputation from Bethel appeared before the temple priests, making inquiry as to whether or not they should continue to fast and weep in the fifth month over the destruction of the city and temple, since the restoration was now under way. Zechariah felt the importance and responsibility of the answer that he was called upon to give. He went to the heart of the matter by asking about the motive that prompted such observance. Was it prompted by a desire to worship Jehovah, or was it a selfish expression of their own feelings? What was the object of their great concern and their punctilious observance of these fasts and ceremonies? Was it prompted by reverent worship, or was it because it gave opportunity for feasting and drinking and revelry? " The motive," says the prophet, " must determine the answer," and from the verses that follow[7] we would infer that their fasts and ceremonies were of doubtful merit as a means of real worship.

Zechariah then recalls to these visiting laymen and

[7] Zech. 7:8-14.

priests some of the social wrongs against which the earlier prophets warned the people. They had admonished the judges to render just verdicts. In social relations, kindness and mercy one to another was laid down as a guiding principle. Oppression of the poor, the widow, the stranger, and the orphan was condemned. The people of old refused to heed this admonition, and slaughter, desolation, and exile was the penalty required for disobedience to these just requirements. "Would you in this new generation, on the eve of renewal of your national life, escape the penalty paid by your fathers? Then," says Zechariah, "do the things that I command." "Speak ye every man the truth with his neighbor; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates; and let none of you devise evil in your hearts against his neighbor, and love no false oath for all these are the things that I hate, saith Jehovah." [8] The clearness with which the prophet speaks out on questions of social relations indicates the slow return of community life to the people, and the beginning of the reorganization of political and social life.

No definite social note is discernible in any of the eight visions of Zechariah, with the exception of the sixth. The chief aim of these symbolic visions was to encourage the people to rebuild the temple. The first vision of the angelic horseman was designed to reveal to the people that there was to be immediate peace throughout the Persian Empire, and opportunity was theirs to rebuild the temple without foreign interference. The second vision, of the four horns and four artisans, symbolically foretold that

[8] Zech. 8: 16, 17.

Jehovah was to destroy the enemies of Judah, and restore her original power. The third vision, of the measuring line, indicated that the Jerusalem of the future would not be confined to the narrow walls of old, but her growth was to extend far into the country. The fourth vision, of the trial, was the promise of the restoration of the priesthood. The fifth vision, of the temple candlestick and its source of supply, symbolized Jehovah, the source of strength, Zerubbabel and Joshua, representing the monarch and the priesthood, the temporal and spiritual power that were to be used by Jehovah to accomplish His purpose. The seventh vision, of the woman within the ephah, symbolized the removal of sin and temptation from the people. The eighth, and last vision, of the war-chariots of Jehovah, foretold the destruction of Persia, the nation that then held Judah in subjection.

The sixth vision, that of the winged volume, taught that " guilt is personal." The dimensions of the roll (twenty cubits in length and ten cubits in breadth) was intended to convey the impression that it was easy to be seen, and thus symbolized the sure detection of the offender and the magnitude of the specific offenses. Theft and perjury were to be surely punished[9] and the land was to be cleansed from evil-doers. This is the vision of a reform in civic affairs. The public conscience was to be aroused, the guilt resting on the people because of indifference was to cease, and the whole community was to escape blame by seeking the personal offender, and inflicting upon him the full penalty of the law. The seventh vision referred to above, which follows in this fifth

[9] Zech. 5:3, 4.

chapter, is a continuation of this same line of reasoning. This lesson is still of tremendous importance. To keep the community life quickened to the importance of punishing the evil-doer is a constant problem. Community indifference to the wrongdoing of its members has been, throughout the ages, a handicap to social integrity and moral progress.

One other passage completes the social message of Zechariah to his people. He has quoted from earlier prophets to show the social principles that they laid down to guide the people in their generation, and these principles have been applied to the new conditions of Zechariah's own time. He has explained that through them he hopes to cast wicked oppressors and unjust judges out of the land. Peace and protection is promised if this can be done, and he teaches clearly that the only way to accomplish this task is to arouse the whole community to a sense of its civic and social responsibility. Then in clear and striking speech he pictures social conditions that must follow. "There shall yet old men and old women sit in the streets of Jerusalem, every man with his staff in his hand for very age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof." [10] This is a striking description of peaceful prosperity, and the natural rewards of a community jealous of its good name. Such conditions can only exist where the principles of morality and social justice are observed and followed.

[10] Zech. 8:4, 5.

TOPICS FOR REPORTS AND INVESTIGATION

1. Conflicting Views Concerning the Date of Authorship of Chapters IX and XIV of the Book of Zechariah.

2. The Allegorical and Dramatic Character of the Book of Zechariah.

3. A Comparative Study of the Messages of Haggai and Zechariah.

4. The Indebtedness of Zechariah to his Predecessors.

5. Oft-repeated Passages in the Book and their Significance.

FURTHER READINGS.

Marcus Dods' "Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi," pp. 59-126; Sanders and Kent's "The Messages of the Later Prophets," pp. 212-233; G. Campbell Morgan's "Living Messages of the Books of the Bible" (Job to Malachi), pp. 317-332; Petrie's "Israel's Prophets," pp. 214-227; Jordan's "Prophetic Ideas and Ideals," pp. 289-297; G. A. Smith's "Twelve Prophets" ("Expositor's Bible"), Vol. II, pp. 255-328; also see article on Zechariah in Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias.

CHAPTER XXI

MALACHI

The prophecy of Malachi closes another period in the history of Jewish prophecy. After the dedication of the temple in 516 B. C., a period of almost sixty years follows that is almost barren of facts of historical interest in the little Judean community. But there were occurring around this Jewish colony events which were destined to change the course of the world's history for all future ages. These events will be briefly related in so far as they have a bearing on the history and destiny of the remnant of the Jews.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Our attention is first directed to the revolt of the Ionians from the supremacy of Persia in 500 B. C., an event which occurred just sixteen years after the dedication of the temple. This resulted in the invasion of Greece by the Persians, and the defeat of their army by Miltiades at Marathon, in 590 B. C. Ten years later, the battle of Thermopylæ was fought, and during the same year the Persian fleet was destroyed at Salamis. The destruction of the Persian army at Platæa in 479 B. C. compelled Xerxes to withdraw from Europe. These victories encouraged Egypt to revolt from Persian rule. In 460 B. C.,

Athens sent an expedition to Egypt to assist in the revolt against Persia. The wars against Greece were remote from Judea, and doubtless had little effect on its affairs, but the revolt in Egypt was of more concern, for the Persian forces must have passed through Syria on their march to Egypt. Doubtless the little Jewish community was compelled to supply provisions for the army, and some of the Jews may have been compelled to render military service. It is safe to assume that the Jews lived a disturbed and uneasy existence during the course of these events.

That the Jewish community was in constant petty hostilities with its neighbors is confirmed by the only two authentic incidents that we have a record of during this period. These incidents are related by Ezra.[1] In the first place, they were charged by their enemies with being in sympathy with the revolt in Egypt, and this matter was officially reported to the Persian court. In the second place, we are told that the mixed population of Samaria succeeded in convincing the officers of the Persian government who resided at Jerusalem that if the Jews were permitted to rebuild the walls which they had begun, they would use the security that such a fortification would give to resist the payment of taxes, and the result would be a revolt from Persian dominion. These enemies, on the basis of this charge, succeeded in securing an order to have the work stopped, and no time was lost in enforcing this decree. It was in the midst of such conditions as are here related, and probably during the revolt of Egypt (462–456 B. C.), that the prophecy of Malachi was delivered.

[1] Ezra 4: 6–23.

SKETCH OF MALACHI

Nothing is known of the personal history of this prophet. In fact, the gravest doubts have been entertained by profound Bible scholars as to whether there ever was such an individual. The name does not occur elsewhere in the Old Testament. The word occurs twice in this book, and in the first instance [2] is translated as a proper name, and in the second instance "my messenger." [3] This fact has given considerable weight to the opinions of those who contend that the word is merely an official title and not a proper name. Some who maintain this theory claim that the book was written by Ezra, and the title "Malachi" was used to indicate his authority as a prophet, but the differences in style and diction in the books of Ezra and Malachi have caused some to seriously doubt the possibility of this theory. While it is impossible ever to settle such a question as this, it is probably a simpler and more natural conclusion to assume, since it was usual for prophets to give their own names in beginning their prophecies, that Malachi was the real name of the prophet, and not a mere official title of some unknown prophet.

THE SOCIAL MESSAGE OF MALACHI

The prophecy of Malachi came after a period of prophetic silence of more than sixty years, Zechariah, his immediate predecessor, having delivered his message, as we have seen in our previous study, in 520 B. C. Great changes had come in the social ideals of the people during this period. We have

[2] Mal. 1:1. [3] Mal. 3:1.

seen that Haggai and Zechariah had encouraged the people to rebuild the temple, and hope had been held out to them of a renewal of political influence and the return of peaceful prosperity. The immediate fulfillment of these prophecies was expected by the Jews, and when they were confronted with opposition and open hostility from their neighboring people, and interference from the Persian government, we find, for the first time in the history of the race, that expression is given to scepticism. "It is vain," said these despondent people, "to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept his charge, and that we have walked mournfully before Jehovah of Hosts?"[4] Religion had now become merely a mourning apparel, worn for the sake of selfish gain, rather than for the joy and spiritual strength it could create. The consequences were just what we would expect. The tide of hope which was stimulated by the teaching of Haggai and Zechariah rapidly ebbed away, and with successive crop failures and opposition from envious neighbors this little band of Jews yielded not only to disappointment and despair, but for the first time manifested a total indifference and a bitter contempt for their duty to God. The social sins into which they fell were but the natural consequences of their despair and mental dejection.

We are told by the prophet that "every man dealt treacherously with his brother."[5] The old ideals had broken down, and with the loss of faith in Jehovah came the loss of faith in each other, a consequence naturally to be looked for. Adultry, perjury,

[4] Mal. 3:14. [5] Mal. 2:10.

dishonesty, and oppression of the dependent became the common practices among the people.[6] Against these practices the prophet raises his voice, and pleads with his people to return unto the Lord, reminding them of the promise of Jehovah that if they will return unto Him that He will return unto them.[7] He follows this promise with an analysis of the causes of their poverty and disappointment. He tells them that they have robbed God by refusing to provide tithes and offerings. Social wrongs and misfortune will continue until the right relation has been established with God.

The social evil that received greatest attention by this great moral reformer was that of the *intermarriage of the Jews with alien women.* Foreign marriages had become common at the time of Malachi, and they had continued for a sufficient time to enable this great social reformer to discern the evil consequences resulting from them. It had become the practice of the Jews to put away their Israelitish wives with impunity and to take unto themselves wives of foreign nationalities. The old Semitic law of divorce was very lax, and the dissolution of marriage ties became a very common and informal custom.

The marriage relation could be severed merely by a husband leading his wife to the door of his tent and telling her to be gone. We are told by Professor Kent, " The Deuteronomic law sought to relieve this injustice by providing that the husband should place in the hand of his wife, as she departed, a document stating the grounds on which he had

[6] Mal. 3:5. [7] Mal. 3:7.

divorced her." However, Malachi found that in spite of this restriction divorce had greatly increased, and both the spirit and the letter of the latter law was being openly violated. His ideals and efforts to prevent this practice place his name among those of the greatest reformers of the world. His ideals of the matrimonial relation, and his teaching on the subject of divorce, are second only in importance to that of Jesus of Nazareth.

In his attack on this problem of alien marriages, the prophet appeals to the sentiment of the people by reminding them that they are putting away the "wife of thy youth," and he then proceeds to denounce such an act as cruel and unjust. He presses his argument a step further, and asserts that marriage is a solemn covenant between man and wife which has divine approval, and that to disregard it or to treat the relation lightly means to bring on the displeasure of Jehovah.[8] In his further argument, we have presented what we should call to-day an argument based on "eugenics." Purity of blood was a matter of great importance at that time. Each family should seek above all things "a godly seed."[9] Children are the "seed of God," and the nation can be made permanent only through them, and the religion of Jehovah must look to the descendants of Abraham for purity and vitality. So much for the necessity for observing the marriage vows.

On the other hand, divorce is an evil to be shunned. Jehovah hates divorce.[10] The prophet shows his contempt for the foreign women that enter into marriage with his people by speaking of them as "the

[8] Mal. 2: 14, 15. [9] Mal. 2: 15. [10] Mal. 2: 16.

daughters of a strange god." He saw in such marriages an inevitable deterioration in moral and religious conviction which would place his people beyond the power of social reform. He concludes his whole argument on the subject of divorce with these striking words: "Therefore, take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth." [11]

Thus did this prophet of social reform lift his voice under divine guidance in behalf of his faltering people. His appearance at this time was all the more significant because he came when there was a dearth of great moral leadership, and at a time when the need was great for resistance to the rapid moral decadence of the people. He may not have lived to see the solution of the social problems that engaged his attention, but he certainly prepared the way for reform. Toward the close of the fifth century B. C., Ezra and Nehemiah were destined to come from the East, and, taking the work up where Malachi left off, they directed their energies to a reformation in the moral and spiritual life of the people and the restoration of material prosperity. The influence of Malachi must have been an important aid in the accomplishment of this twofold purpose.

TOPICS FOR REPORTS AND INVESTIGATION

1. The Date of the Authorship of Malachi.
2. A Comparative Study of the Teaching Concerning Divorce by the Prophets.
3. The Influence of the Priests on the Social Life of the People as Revealed by a Study of Malachi.

[11] Mal. 2:15.

4. Malachi's Proposed Remedies for Social Sin.

5. The Permanence of Malachi's Contribution to Social Reform.

FURTHER READINGS

Jordan's "Prophetic Ideas and Ideals," Chap. XXV, pp. 301-310; Kirkpatrick's "The Doctrine of the Prophets," pp. 504-511; Petrie's "Israel's Prophets," Chap. XVI, pp. 228-243; Kent's "Makers and Teachers of Judaism," ("Historical Bible"), pp. 60-72; Marcus Dods' "Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi," pp. 128–153; G. A. Smith's "Twelve Prophets" ("Expositor's Bible"), Vol. II, pp. 331-372; G. Campbell Morgan's "Living Messages of the Books of the Bible" (Job to Malachi), pp. 335-349; articles on Malachi in encyclopedias and Bible dictionaries.

CHAPTER XXII

NEHEMIAH'S SOCIAL REFORMS

The relation of Nehemiah to his times and the importance of his social reforms justifies the inclusion of a brief study of his social message at this point in these studies of the prophets. It also seems advisable to make incidental mention of the mission of Ezra, the forerunner of Nehemiah, who accomplished some of the reforms previously undertaken by Malachi.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The reader will recall that the decree of Cyrus which granted permission to the Jews to return was issued in 536 B. C., and beginning with Haggai our subsequent studies have been concerned with the Jewish community at Jerusalem. In the meantime, prosperity had come to the Jews that had remained in Babylon. At this time the seat of war was far removed, and they were permitted to abide in peace and prosperity. They used this opportunity to promote their spiritual and intellectual life. "Babylonian Jews," says Miss Latimer [1] in writing of this period, "having no temple, supplied the place of the services by listening to the exhortations of the prophets, by strictly keeping the Sabbath and the holy

[1] "Judea from Cyrus to Titus," p. 54.

feasts, by attention to the rules of diet, by avoidance of Gentile marriages; keeping themselves, by every means in their power, a separate people." This is an interesting picture, and pathetic in prospect, for in just a few years (333 B. C.) Alexander of Macedon was destined to invade the Persian Empire, and his conquering armies were to scatter the Jewish exiles into widely separated cities and localities. Many of them were transported to the city of Alexander, where they became important factors in the development of this great city. We are told by M. Renan that the Jews were both prosperous and influential in Alexandria. "The regularity of their lives," says he, "and the strictness of their morals procured them situations as confidential servants. They made excellent clerks and secretaries, and were found by the government especially useful in the work of administration."

To return to the prosperous period of the Jews in Babylon during the reign of Artaxerxes, it is easy to contrast their prosperity, morality, and spirituality with that of their kinsmen at Jerusalem. Reform was needed badly by the little colony far away, and no leadership there was available for the task. Three things, according to Miss Latimer, would be essential to a reformer's success. "He must come from without, not from within the Judean colony; he must be clothed with authority higher than the ruling classes at Jerusalem; he must be at once a zealot and a teacher." Ezra fulfilled these conditions. When he heard of the conditions that existed at Jerusalem, his love for his people caused him to seek permission to go, and in the seventh year of the reign of Artaxerxes his desire was made possible by a decree

of the king. Ezra was accompanied by 1700 men, and an unknown number of women and children. When he arrived in Jerusalem, he found conditions even worse than he had expected, but he immediately set about his task of reform with zeal and courage.

His greatest social problem was that of *mixed marriages*, and he determined to eradicate this evil against which Malachi had contended. After receiving the promise of support from certain influential leaders of the community, he called a mass meeting, and upbraided the people for this serious breach of Jehovah's covenant, and, in spite of some opposition, succeeded in having an inquiry made concerning the prevalence of mixed marriages, and those guilty of this offence were compelled to separate from heathen wives.[2]

At this interesting point in the reform work of Ezra, the curtain falls upon this little colony of Jews, and it is destined not to rise again for a period of thirteen years. We do not know what interrupted the work of Ezra, but subsequent events justify the conclusion that grave disasters came upon the Jewish community. The interruption may have been due to a rebellion in Egypt, or a change in the attitude of Artaxerxes toward the Jews, or some other cause. In the midst of this deplorable condition, Hanani returned from Jerusalem to Babylon and informed his brother, Nehemiah, of conditions there.[3] Nehemiah's life and public service peculiarly qualified him to lend assistance to his people, and he determined to follow in the steps of Ezra and go to the aid of his people.

[2] Ib. p. 53.

[3] Neh. 1:2 ff.

SKETCH OF NEHEMIAH

Nehemiah was the son of Hachaliah, and although a Jewish exile in Babylon, he was cupbearer to King Artaxerxes, by whom he was regarded with high favor. All the authentic information that we have concerning this distinguished Jewish patriot is contained in the book bearing his name. His official position brought him into intimate touch with the king, for it was a part of his duty as cupbearer to admit visitors to the sovereign's room. This was doubtless a factor in gaining for him permission to return to Jerusalem, and he began his journey in the twentieth year of the reign of Artaxerxes. He carried letters of introduction from the king to the governors, and a bodyguard was delegated to accompany him.[4] He arrived in Jerusalem in due time, and we have a record of his reforms and administration down to 432 B. C. Of his life and character the Schaff-Herzog "Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge" says: "He was one of those ardent Jewish patriots whom the attractions of a foreign court did not make ashamed of their nationality, or indifferent to the welfare of Jerusalem. He combined the practical skill of the architect with the vigilance and fortitude of the general."

SOCIAL REFORMS OF NEHEMIAH

Immediately upon his arrival in Jerusalem, Nehemiah undertook to fortify the city by repairing the walls and gates.[5] Before he had time to complete this undertaking, he was called upon to deal with a

[4] Neh. 2:9. [5] Neh. 2:11 ff.

social evil that, unless it could be averted, was destined to retard greatly his work. The poorer Jews round about the city, as a result of poverty and distress resulting from crop failures and other disasters, had been compelled to mortgage their lands to the rich in order to provide food for their families and to pay the government tax. The Persian "*pekah*" was very exacting in demanding prompt payment of the royal tribute or tax. No mercy was shown if these poor people were not able to raise their mortgages when they became due. So exacting were these rich creditors that in some instances the poor man was forced to surrender his children to the creditor, to become slaves in the latter's household. We are told that Nehemiah was very angry when he found out the true state of affairs. He called a meeting of the leading men, both lay and clerical, and delivered to them a stinging address. "Ye exact usury," says he, "every man of his brother. We [Jews of Babylon] after our ability have redeemed our brethren, the Jews, that were sold unto the nations; and would ye even sell your brethren, and should they be sold unto us?" He paused to wait for an answer, but they were so conscience-stricken that they could not find words with which to reply.[6] Continuing his speech, he said:

"The thing that ye do is not good. Ought ye not to walk in the fear of our God, because of the reproach of the nations, our enemies? And I likewise, my brethren, and my servants, do lend them money and grain. I pray you let us leave off this usury. Restore, I pray you, to them, even this day,

6 Neh. 5:8.

their fields, their vineyards, their olive-yards, and their houses, also the hundredth part of the money, and of the grain, the new wine, and the oil, that ye exact of them." [7]

The appeal was too strong to be resisted. With one voice they exclaimed: "We will do even as thou sayeth." But remembering their broken promise to Ezra, Nehemiah decided to bind them with an oath; so he called out the priests to administer the oath to them that they would do even as they had promised.

Nehemiah had won a signal victory over these rich Jews, and he convinced all the people of the sincerity of his purpose by immediately manifesting generosity toward the poor. He gave liberally of his own means to aid them, and he refused to make any of the exactions that had been practiced by the Persian "*pekah*" who had preceded him.[8] We are not surprised that his influence and popularity grew. This enabled him to arouse the men of Jerusalem to put forth such a united effort as to enable them to complete the rebuilding of the walls and gates of the city in the surprisingly short period of fifty-two days.

With this work completed, Nehemiah undertook another reform that was fundamental. He was determined to compel the observance of the Sabbath, which was being sadly neglected by the Jews. The commercial pursuits of ordinary days were carried on openly without any regard to sacred ordinance or divine decree. He excluded all traders on the Sabbath, and closed the gates against them. When these traders attempted to lodge just outside the

[7] Neh. 5:9-11. [8] Neh. 5:15-18.

city-gates, Nehemiah ordered them to depart, and he tells us that after he had threatened them that "from that time forth they came no more on the Sabbath."[9] Thus the observance of the Sabbath was effectively restored in a sane and practical manner.

With these reforms accomplished, Nehemiah set about the correction of the evil that had baffled Malachi, and the social problem that had met with only temporary solution at the hands of Ezra, his great forerunner and earlier contemporary — i. e., the prevention of mixed marriages. Nehemiah was familiar with the fact that the Jews of the dispersion had placed great emphasis on the preservation of the purity of their blood, and the avoidance of mixed marriages had been carefully observed, but, as we have seen, this question had not received such emphasis at Jerusalem, and this regulation was openly violated, not only by the laymen, but by the priests as well. There could be no question about Nehemiah's position on the subject of mixed marriages.

His attention was directed to this question one day when he met in the street some children who were unable to speak the Hebrew tongue, but spoke the dialect of some heathen nation. On inquiry he found that their Jewish fathers had married women of Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab.[10] Nehemiah decided to make an example of the fathers of these children, and not only publicly reprimanded them, but even used violence "by plucking out their hair." Then he laid down the law that in the future no alliances were to be made by Jews with those who were not true children of Israel. This was the crowning reform

[9] Neh. 13:21. [10] Neh. 13:23.

of Nehemiah's life. The success of his social reforms is one of the outstanding facts in Jewish history.

The reforms of Nehemiah were of great significance, and came at a critical period in Jewish history. He had reëstablished a vital relationship between the Jews of Babylon and Palestine, and made the principles of Sabbath observance and the preservation of the purity of blood essential bonds of union for both. The importance of these social principles is easy to realize when we consider that Alexander the Great was soon to conquer and denationalize the East by amalgamating the conquered peoples with the Greeks of the West. Only one people, so we are told by the historian, was able to resist this amalgamating process, and that was the Jews. They were scattered abroad, as we have seen, but they remained a distinct people. This was made possible because of the ideals and public ministry of Ezra and Nehemiah. Thus was the Jewish religion saved from Hellenism, the most subtle force and the most fascinating product of the ancient world.

TOPICS FOR REPORTS AND INVESTIGATION

1. A Study of the Fifty-sixth Chapter of Isaiah in Relation to the Social Message and Teaching of Nehemiah.
2. Comparison and Contrast of the Life and Public Ministry of Ezra and Nehemiah.
3. The Conflict between Hellenism and Judaism.
4. Nehemiah as a Public Administrator.
5. A Study of the Book of Ruth in Relation to the Social Teaching of Nehemiah and Ezra.

FURTHER READINGS

Kent's "Makers and Teachers of Judaism" ("Historical Bible Series"), pp. 117-126; Latimer's "Judea from Cyrus to Titus," Chapters III and IV, pp. 45-77; Cornill's "Prophets of Israel," pp. 155–163; Kirkpatrick's "The Doctrine of the Prophets," pp. 494–500; articles on Ezra and Nehemiah in Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias.

CHAPTER XXIII

JOEL

The period into which we now enter has been characterized as the "*age of legalism*" because of the reforms of Nehemiah and Ezra, and the acceptance of the Levitical Law. The age of the prophet Joel may also be regarded as the introduction to the Grecian period of prophecy, the period that marked the close of the work of these great moral teachers and religious leaders.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The date of the public ministry of Joel must be established before we can relate his prophecy to the times, and this is one of the most difficult problems of biblical criticism. Bible scholars have agreed that the Book of Joel is either of very early or very late date. The authorities place it either before 800 B. C. or after 500 B. C. G. A. Smith [1] supports the latter view with the following argument: "Unlike every other prophet, except Haggai, Malachi, and Zechariah,[2] Joel mentions neither Assyria, which emerged upon the prophetic horizon about 760, nor the Babylonian Empire, which had fallen by 537. The presumption is that he wrote before 760 or after 537."

[1] "Twelve Prophets," Vol. II, p. 376.

[2] Joel 9:14.

The argument for the earlier date may be summarized as follows: The placing of the book among the earliest of the twelve minor prophets; the simplicity of the text, and the absence of detail which characterized the later prophets; the great importance attached to the ravages of the locusts, which indicated a purely agricultural state of society; and the absence of all mention of the law and its specific violation.

The later date is supported by a growing number of critics on the ground that the Book of Joel contains the first Old Testament reference to the Greeks;[3] that the dispersion had already taken place,[4] and the temple and the city walls[5] had already been rebuilt, which would indicate that this prophet lived after the days of Nehemiah. It is not necessary to enter minutely into the argument that this problem has brought forth. It is sufficient to say that the weight of evidence tends to support the later date. Cornill reaches this conclusion, but with more certainty than it seems the facts would warrant. "Few results of Old Testament research," says he, "are as surely established as that the Book of Joel dates from the century between Ezra and Alexander the Great."[6]

If this view be correct, Joel prophesied at the close of an age of material prosperity. Probably a half century intervened between the reforms of Nehemiah and the adoption of the Law by the people. The rich and poor had become united. Many Jews, doubtless attracted by the social reforms and the

[3] Joel 3:6.
[4] Joel 3:2.
[5] Joel 2:9.
[6] "Prophets of Israel," p. 164.

supremacy of the Law, returned to the land of Judah. The Jews were doubtless inspired with hope for national independence because of the weakness of the central government under Artaxerxes II (404–358 B. C.). The only interference at this time seems to have come from their neighbors of Phœnicia, Philistia, and Edom,[7] whose petty enmities were a source of constant annoyance.

SKETCH OF JOEL

All that we know of Joel is contained in a single sentence. "The word of the Lord came to Joel, the son of Pethuel." *Jo-el* is the abbreviation of Jehovah-Elohim, and means, "Jehovah is God." Therefore, the name of the prophet contains in itself a veritable confession of faith. The name is not a rare one, as it occurs no less than fourteen times in the Bible. The first appearance of the name is in Samuel,[8] where we are told that this was the name of one of Samuel's sons, who was a judge. The last mention of the name preceding that of the prophet was in Nehemiah.[9] Joel the prophet is mentioned only twice in the Bible; once in the introduction to his own prophecy, and once in the Book of Acts,[10] where he is quoted.

According to Jewish tradition he was born at Bethhoron, a historic mountain pass of Benjamin, where Israel had often withstood the onslaughts of her enemies in the early days of her history. He probably lived in Judah, and spent much of his life in the neighborhood of Jerusalem. His ready fa-

[7] Joel 3:4-19.
[8] I Sam. 8:2.
[9] Neh. 11:9.
[10] Acts 2:16.

miliarity with the temple, and his many detailed references to the duties of the priests, have led some to conclude that he belonged to the priestly class, but this conclusion is doubtful.

THE MESSAGE OF JOEL

The book consists of two distinct parts. In the *first* part [11] the prophet addresses the people. He predicts a twofold calamity that is about to come upon Judah. (1) A *scourge of locusts* will come to destroy the vine and the growing grain, and leave the land a barren waste; (2) a *disastrous drouth* will blight the fruits of the orchard, and cause the growing grain of the fields to wither and die. In the *second* part of the book [12] Jehovah speaks, His words conveying a message of promise and hope. The calamity described by the prophet is to be removed in the near future, and the promise of blessings in the more remote future is held out to the people.

The teaching of the book clearly presents two great themes — the great day of judgment and the promise of redemption. The plague of locusts and the drouth which had come upon the country were made to symbolize and characterize the day of Jehovah, whose coming would bring both judgment and redemption to the world. He regarded the day as being very near. "Alas for the day! for the day of the Lord is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come. . . . Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain; let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand." [13]

[11] Joel 1:2 to 2:7.
[12] Joel 2:18 to 3:21.
[13] Joel 1:15; 2:1.

But there is still a chance to avert this catastrophe through the repentance of God's people. "Rend your hearts and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God; for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth Him of the evil." [14] Therefore, says he, assemble the people, from the youngest to the oldest, and have the priests to call them to repentance, for if this can be accomplished, blessings will come instead of judgment, and prosperity will return to take the place of privation. This is, in brief, the teaching of the book.

The Book of Joel is remarkable for its expressions of faith and hope in the ultimate triumphs of Judaism, and the ultimate conquest over the heathen nations. With remarkable power he contrasts Judah with the other nations. The offences of the nations against Judah are summarized, and God's judgment is declared to be certain to fall upon the enemies of Judah, while blessings and glory are promised to the people of God.

Joel has been charged with ignoring social and ethical elements in his prophecy. Some critics feel that he subordinated the moral instruction to a zeal for a message filled with hopeful triumph of Judah over her heathen enemies. This conclusion is hardly well founded. He does deal in more general terms than most of the other ethical leaders of Israel. There is but one reference to any social sin of Judah, and that was in ridicule of the drunkards because their supply of new wine had been cut off through the blight of the grapes.[15] All the social sins of Judah were comprehended by the prophet in the word "re-

[14] Joel 2:13. [15] Joel 1:5.

pentance." That repentance was necessary, implied social wrongs and evil deeds. "It is true that repentance is not defined," says Kirkpatrick, "and that particular sins are not singled out for condemnation, but we cannot tell how far these brief utterances may have been supplemented by oral teaching." [16] The invitation "to turn unto the Lord your God" implies that the people had wandered away from God. The locust plague and the drouth with which the people had been afflicted, or were about to be afflicted, is clearly presented by the prophet as a divine call for the people to turn unto Jehovah, but this is as near as Joel gets to a definite social message. If he had any specific sins in mind, he does not reveal them in his brief poetic message. This fact alone, however, would not justify us in drawing the conclusion that he was wanting in ethical interest.

TOPICS FOR REPORTS AND INVESTIGATION

1. The Date of Authorship of Joel's Prophecy.
2. The Priestly Element in Joel's Prophecy.
3. The Tendency of Later Judaism, as Revealed in Joel's Prophecy.
4. A Study of Familiar Passages in Joel, and Their Relation to his Message.
5. The Political Situation in the Time of Joel.

FURTHER READINGS

Kirkpatrick's "The Doctrine of the Prophets," pp. 47-79; Cornill's "The Prophets of Israel," pp. 164-169; G. A. Smith's "Twelve Prophets," ("Expositor's Bible"), Chap. XVII, pp. 375-445; Petrie's "Israel's Prophets"; Sanders and Kent's "The Later Messages

[16] "The Doctrine of the Prophets," p. 78.

of the Prophets," pp. 289-302; G. Campbell Morgan's "Living Messages of the Books of the Bible" (Job to Malachi), pp. 181-195; articles on Joel in Bible encyclopedias and Bible dictionaries.

CHAPTER XXIV

JONAH

As Joel was peculiarly the prophet of Judaism, so was the prophecy of Jonah the world's classic against narrowness and smallness. The popular misconception of this book is one of the misfortunes of the world. Its mission is so lofty, and its importance is so great, as to cause men of understanding to exalt it to a place of supreme eminence. "I have read this Book of Jonah at least a hundred times," says Cornill,[1] "and I will publicly avow, for I am not ashamed of my weakness, that I cannot even now take up this marvelous book, nay, nor even speak of it, without the tears rising to my eyes, and my heart beating higher. This apparently trivial book is one of the grandest that was ever written, and I should like to say to every one who approaches it, 'Take off thy shoes, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.'"

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The books of prophecy are not arranged in the Bible in chronological order, as we have seen from our previous studies. Jonah has been placed ninth in the order of arrangement of the sixteen prophets from Isaiah to Malachi, but many of the earlier Bible authorities placed Jonah as the first of the writing

[1] "Prophets of Israel," p. 170.

prophets. We have seen that this order was probably not correct, and the more recent tendency has been to place this prophecy at about the close of the prophetic period.

The earlier date of authorship grew out of the supposition that the prophet Jonah, who lived during the reign of Jereboam II, about 780 B. C., was the author of the Book of Jonah. There is nothing to justify this conclusion. The book is narrative in form, which is peculiar to Jewish prophecy, and Jonah, the son of Amittai, is made the hero of the book rather than the author of it. There is no reason for assuming that the author was an eyewitness of the adventures of this Jonah, or even a contemporary with him. The tense of the verb in Jonah 3:3 would indicate that Nineveh had ceased to be a great city. The fact that this city fell in 608 B. C. would indicate that the book was written after this date. In addition to this fact, "Its many Aramaic words," says Professor Kent,[2] "its quotations from the Book of Joel, its universalities, and its missionary spirit all indicate that it comes either from the closing years of the Persian or from the earlier part of the Greek period." This would bring the book probably between 350 B. C. and 200 B. C., the date that may be said to close the period of Jewish prophecy.

The description of this period has been well characterized by Sanders and Kent.[3] "The century following 350 B. C. was filled with shameful acts of cruelty and wrong, and the Jews were the victims of

[2] "Makers and Teachers of Judaism" ("The Historical Bible"), p. 174.

[3] "Messages of the Later Prophets," p. 344.

the most shocking indignities. There was little in the character of the people with whom they came in painful contact to arouse their affection or to kindle their missionary enthusiasm. It was a crisis in which the very life of Judaism was in jeopardy. It is not strange that they forgot their high calling to be Jehovah's witnesses to the world and that curses were oftener on their lips than blessings."

It was during this period that Judaism had its greatest conflict, that with Hellenism. In this conflict, the Greeks became acquainted with monotheistic religion, and the Jews in turn acquired their first knowledge of the culture of the Greeks. In the process many Greeks became proselytes to Judaism, and some of the Jews forsook their religion in their zeal for Hellenistic culture. The Jews of Alexander and elsewhere began to speak Greek, and the Hebrew scriptures were translated into Greek (the Septuagint). Thus the Jewish people came to face two of the greatest crises of their history, and these pointed in opposite directions. In the first place, the hardships that they had suffered at the hands of the Oriental people had caused them to assume a narrow Jewism that was foreign to the spirit and essence of their religion; and secondly, their fascination for Hellenistic culture caused them to ignore and neglect, and even to forsake, the religion that had made them a separate people. This experience has no parallel in history. With our present perspective of history we can see that both Hellenism and Judaism were needed. The world needed Judaism to counteract Hellenistic immorality, and Hellenism was needed to protest against the narrowness of Judaism. It

was in the midst of these conditions that the message of the Book of Jonah was sent forth.

THE MESSAGE OF JONAH

Some time during this struggle, the Book of Jonah appeared. The author saw the dangers that threatened his people. We cannot determine with certainty whether the book is merely an allegory, or a story based on a real adventure. But whatever the source of the story or the nature of the literary composition, the purpose is the same, and the Jewish people were well prepared to understand the larger meaning of the narrative. They had been taught for half a thousand years that Israel was Jehovah's servant, whose mission was to save the world through social laws and righteous judgments. They had been taught that as a punishment for refusing to become God's willing messenger they had been swallowed up by Nebuchadnezzar. The experiences through which the Jewish people had passed made it easy for them to interpret the symbolism in the narrative of Jonah. Jonah is made to symbolize Israel, the messenger of Jehovah, who had refused to carry monotheism to the wicked nations. She had sought to confine her rich heritage within the small dominions of her own territory, and when pressed by moral leaders to fulfill her mission, she had fled in the opposite direction and attempted to find relief for her conscience in the fascinations of Hellenistic culture. Now, to punish this waywardness, God provided a great fish, Babylon, to swallow up the messenger and to keep her confined until she had become penitent and willing to fulfill the will of Jehovah. The punishment accom-

plished its purpose and the messenger was delivered. Obediently she now went upon her mission, but still resented the giving of Jehovah's mercy to the Gentiles and longed for the time when they would be punished for the wrong they had inflicted on her. She still found more satisfaction in the memories of her brief nationality than in the imperishable religion that Jehovah had intrusted to her to give to the world. But the little gourd of nationality was only of comparatively brief duration, and the messenger was compelled out of dire necessity to face the larger world problems.

The social element in the Book of Jonah is almost negligible. The unknown author does not deem it necessary to specify the particular sins against which he was to protest at Nineveh, but the seriousness of the offences of the Ninevites is easy to discern in the urgency of his message, and the shortness of the time that was left to them in which to repent.[4]

While the book is wanting in respect to the social offences which were common to the people of those times, it is not wanting in the larger note that we are just beginning to hear even in this twentieth century. We here have a prophet thinking and uttering world thoughts. For the past decade we have been talking world peace, and to-day, in the midst of a world war, many patriotic Americans are advocating a league of nations to enforce peace. This is the point toward which the author of the Book of Jonah was endeavoring to lead his people. As Professor Jordan has told us, in the message of Jonah we see "the protest against littleness. The stinging satire

[4] Jon. 3:4.

against smallness is the main thing; it is through this that God rebukes our narrow bigotry and petulant pride."

The great positive truths of the book are nowhere better summarized than in Sanders and Kent's discussion of the subject:[5] "The book [of Jonah] bristles with great prophetic truths. Nowhere is the infinite love of God for the ignorant, the sinful, and even for those who defy Him, more beautifully and simply presented in the Old Testament. The fact that the fulfilment of every prophecy, however detailed and emphatic, depends upon certain conditions determinate upon human action is forcibly taught. The book also emphasizes the universality of Jehovah's rule, and indicates clearly the true place and rôle of the Jewish race in his creation. Above all, it sets before the Jews their supreme opportunity and duty as Jehovah's enlightened messenger to proclaim his truth to mankind."

There is one other very interesting point concerning this little Book of Jonah. It ends with a question. It is God's question propounded to Jonah, which he did not answer: "And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?" It is the great question of mercy that God holds out to man; it is the great unanswered question of the world. With this question the prophetic literature of Israel comes to a close. This lone, but brilliant star which shone out of the darkness of the age of Hellenism now disappears from view, and no

[5] Ib., p. 347.

other star of prophecy was destined to appear until John the Baptist came to herald the appearance of the Star of Bethlehem. Thus was the last prophet before the coming of the Savior of men to speak the message that approached nearest to the teaching of Christ himself.

TOPICS FOR REPORTS AND INVESTIGATION

1. Contrast Between the Messages of Joel and Jonah.
2. The Date of Authorship of Jonah.
3. The Unique Characteristics of this Book.
4. Comparison and Contrast of Nahum and Jonah.
5. The Teaching of the Book Concerning God.

FURTHER READINGS

G. A. Smith's "Twelve Minor Prophets" ("Expositor's Bible"), Vol: II, pp. 493-541; Sanders and Kent's "The Messages of the Later Prophets," pp. 339-354; Cornill's "Prophets of Israel," pp. 170-174; Jordan's "Prophetic Ideals and Ideas," pp. 313-323; G. Campbell Morgan's "Living Messages of the Books of the Bible" (Job to Malachi), pp. 227-241; Petrie's "Israel's Prophets," pp. 9-23; articles on Jonah in Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias.

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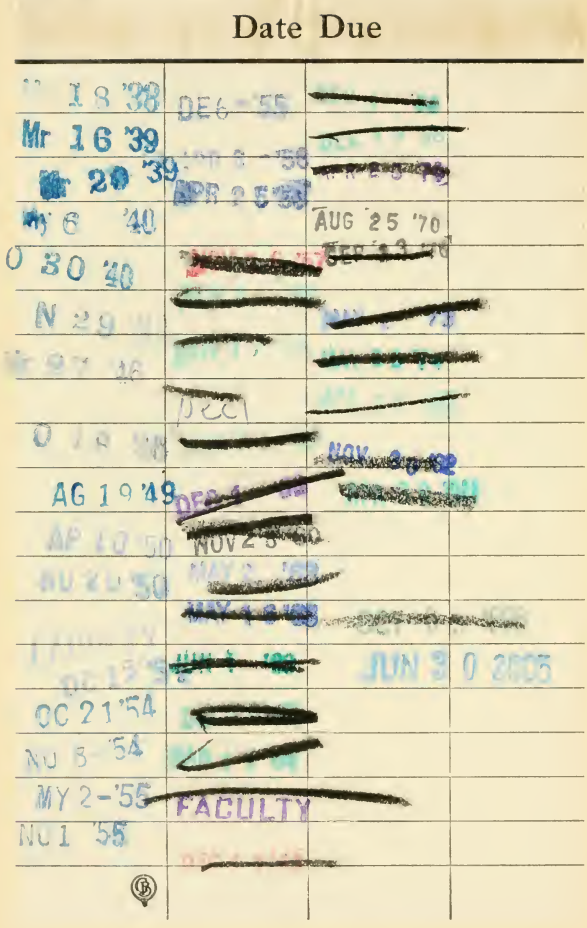
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